5760

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY,

EXHIBITED IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

ADDRESSED TO

THE CANDIDATES

FOR THE

BACCALAUREATE,

IN

YALE COLLEGE,

SEPTEMBER 9th, 1797.

BY THE REV. TIMOTHY DWIGHT, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE,

WITH A

RECOMMENDATORY ADDRESS

By the Rev. Dr. RYLAND, and the Rev. Mr. FULLER.

New-Haven:

PRINTED BY GEORGE BUNCE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ADDRESS

TO

THE READER.

THESE Diſcourſes, as publiſhed on the other ſide the Atlantic, needed no Recommendation; the Author being there well known, both as Poet and a Divine. In an Engliſh Edition however, it will not be thought preſuming to prefix our names; as it is with a hope of extending their circulation among our connections.

The moſt ſtrenuous efforts have been made of late years, in America as well as in Europe, to promote the cauſe of Infidelity: but there are not wanting, both in that country and in our own, men who are valiant for the truth upon the earth. In this illuſtrious band Dr. DWIGHT will be readily admitted to an honourable ſtation.

In theſe Diſcourſes he has clearly expoſed the inſufficiency, inconſiſtency and immorality of that falſe Philoſophy which vainly aſpires to rival and ſubvert the Goſpel. Beſides detecting the inſidious arts of modern Infidels, and apprizing young perſons of the chief ſources of their danger; he has diſplayed the excellency and efficacy of the Chriſtian Syſtem, and ſhewn it to be, what it is, the Religion of the Heart. The intelligent reader will eaſily perceive that the author's

natural turn for poetry, without diminiſhing from the ſolidity of his reaſoning, imparts to his proſaic compoſitions, a conciſe, impreſſive and glowing energy.

It may gratify ſome readers to be informed that Dr. DWIGHT is a grandſon of Preſident EDWARDS; and that on the death of Dr. SILES in 1795, he was called to ſucceed him as Preſident of Yale College, New-Haven; to the graduated young men of which Seminary theſe Diſcourſes were addreſſed. Being delivered in the form of Sermons the author has not made formal references to the writings of his opponents; but he doubtleſs conſiders himſelf as reſponſible for the truth of all he has aſſerted.

May the Principles here defended continue to be underſtood, believed and felt, by Chriſtians at large, and eſpecially by every candidate for the Chriſtian Miniſtry.

JOHN RYLAND,
ANDREW FULLER.

FEB. 12, 1799.

ADVERTISEMENT.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN Yale College it is customary for the President or the Professor of Divinity, to address a Discourse to the Candidates of the Baccalaureate, on the Sabbath, preceding the public Commencement. The following Discourses were delivered, on this occasion, to the class which was graduated the last year, and are now pbulished at their request. They were originally long, perhaps longer than the reader would have wished. I have, however, considerably enlarged them. For this I have no other apology, than, that the method, in which the subject is pursued, appeared to me the best, which presented itself at the time. If this apology should in the judgment of the Reader be insufficient, I submit cheerfully to his censure.

YALE-COLLEGE, March 4th, 1798.

THE

NATURE AND *DANGER*

OF

INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware, lest any man spoil you through Philosophy and vain Deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after CHRIST.

WHEN the Goſpel was publiſhed by the Apoſtles, it was according to the prophetic declaration of its Author, vigorouſly oppoſed by the world. This oppoſition originated from various ſources; but, whenceſoever derived, wore one uniform character of induſtry, art, and bitterneſs. The bigotry of the Jews, and the ſword of the Gentiles, the learning of the wiſe, the perſuaſion of the eloquent, and the force of the powerful, were alike exerted to cruſh the riſing enemy.

Among the kinds of oppoſition, which they were called to encounter, not the leaſt laborious, malignant, or dangerous, was the Philoſophy of the age. A large number of their firſt converts lived in countries, where the language of the Greeks was ſpoken, and their Philoſophy received. The things, which this

this Philoſophy profeſſed to teach, were ſubſtantially the ſame with thoſe which were taught by the Apoſtles: viz. the Character and Will of God, and the Duty and Supreme Intereſt of Men. Hence it naturally became an object of veneration, aſſumed the ſtation of a rival to the Goſpel, and exhibited an impoſing aſpect, eſpecially to young and unſettled converts.

The doctrines, and the ſpirit, of the Philoſophers were, however, generally direct counterparts to thoſe of the Apoſtles. Some truths, and truths of high importance, they undoubtedly taught; but they blended them with groſs and numberleſs errors. Some moral and commendable practices they, at times inculcated: but ſo interwoven with immoralities, that the parts of the web could never be ſeparated by the common hand. Covetous, ſelf-ſufficient, and ſenſual, they looked down with ſupreme contempt on the poor, ſelf-denying and humble followers of Chriſt, and on their artleſs, direct, undiſguiſed, and practical preaching. Notwithſtanding this contempt, it, however, prevailed againſt all their ſpecious logic, pompous eloquence, and arrogant pretenſions. Their Philoſophy, enveloped in fable and figures, perplexed with ſophiſtry, and wandering with perpetual excurſion round about moral ſubjects, ſatisfied, in no permanent degree the underſtanding, and affected in no uſeful degree the heart: while the Goſpel ſimple, plain, and powerful, gained the full aſſent of common ſenſe, and reduced all the affections under its controul. Of courſe, the contempt of Philoſophers was changed into hatred, rivalry, and perſecution; and their ridicule of Chriſtianity was ſucceeded by the ſerious efforts of violence and malignity.

St. Paul, who appears thoroughly to have comprehended the nature, and often to have experienced the effects, of the exiſting Philoſophy, has with great

great force expoſed its dangerous tendency. In the beginning of his firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians, he has given an ample account of its inefficiency and emptineſs, and a full refutation of its inſolent pretenſions to be a rule of life and ſalvation. The arguments of its weakneſs and miſchievous tendency, furniſhed, in various paſſages of Scripture by him and his companions, remain ſtill unrefuted; and, as they were at firſt, ſo they are at this day, effectual means of preſerving no ſmall part of mankind from the deſtruction, of which it is the natural and certain parent.

In the text, this Philoſophy is characterized in a moſt proper and forcible manner. It is termed Philoſophy and vain deceit; a Hebraiſm, of the ſame import with vain and deceitful Philoſophy; deceitful in its nature, doctrines, and arguments, and vain in its efficacy to accompliſh the ends which it propoſes. It is aſſerted to be *after the tradition of men*, and *after the rudiments of the world*; but *not after Chriſt*; *in whom*, the Apoſtle ſubjoins, *dwelt all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*: i. e. It is ſuch a ſcheme of morals and religion, as is ſuited to the character of the Inventors; Men, weak and wicked, deceived and deceitful; unable to deviſe, to comprehend, or to teach, the character of God, or the duty of mankind. It is ſuch a ſcheme of morals and religion, as accords with the principles and practices of the diſciples, to whom it is taught; formed not with a deſign to amend the heart, and reform the life; but with a view to gain acceptance by flattering luſt, and by juſtifying, ſoothing, and quieting guilt. The tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world, are phraſes, which may be variouſly interpreted, but they admit, I apprehend of no interpretation, which will not ſupport the paraphraſe here given.

To this Philoſophy, and the teachers of it, the Apoſtle directs his followers to *beware leſt they ſhould become a prey*. The Greek word here uſed, denotes

 gathering

gathering and carrying finally off the spoils of a vanquished enemy; and therefore ſtrongly expreſſes the complete ruin, to which St. Paul conſidered his converts as expoſed.

The Philoſophy, which has oppoſed Chriſtianity in every ſucceeding age, has uniformly worn the ſame character with that deſcribed in the text. It has reſted on the ſame foundations, proceeded from the ſame diſpoſition, aimed at the ſame ends, and purſued them by the ſame means. Equally remote has it been from truth, equally unſupported by evidence, and equally fraught with danger and ruin.

Satisfied of the juſtice of theſe aſſertions, I feel it, Young Gentlemen, to be my duty, on this occaſion to exhort you

To beware, leſt you become a prey to the Philosophy, which opposes the Gospel.

To impreſs on your minds the propriety, and the importance of this exhortation, I ſhall endeavour, in the

Firſt place, To prove to you, that this Philoſophy is vain and deceitful;

Secondly, To ſhew you that you are in danger of becoming a prey to it; and

Thirdly, To diſſuade you by ſeveral arguments from thus yielding yourſelves a prey.

Firſt. I ſhall endeavour to prove to you that this Philoſophy is vain and deceitful.

You will obſerve, that it is a particular kind of Philoſophy, againſt which all my arguments are directed. Philoſophy at large, or the Uſe and the Attainments of our Reaſon, in the candid and careful examination of every queſtion, within the limits of our underſtanding, ſo far as it ſprings from a real deſire of inveſtigating truth, and proceeds on ſatisfactory evidence, is not only undeſerving of cenſure, but deſerving of the higheſt praiſe. It is the intereſt and the duty of all men, ſo far as their condition will allow; and, as you well know, has by me, in the

the office of an Inſtructor, been earneſtly and unconditionally urged on you, as peculiarly your intereſt and duty. That Philoſophy only, which is oppoſed to Chriſtianity, is the ſubject of the following obſervations. There is indeed much other Philoſophy, which buſies itſelf with government, medicine, and various other ſubjects, which is equally vain and deceitful; but with this I have, at preſent, no concern.

The great object, profeſſedly aimed at by the Philoſophy in queſtion, and on the attainment of which all its value depends, is to determine what is the Duty, and the ſupreme Intereſt of man. This it is plain, muſt depend entirely on the Will of God. To do whatever God chuſes muſt be man's ſupreme intereſt, and duty alike. It is his duty, both becauſe God wills it, and becauſe it is right. As his whole well-being depends on God only, his ſupreme intereſt muſt conſiſt entirely in pleaſing God. He can receive no good when God will not give it, and God will not give unleſs he be pleaſed. In order, therefore, to the diſcovery of man's ſupreme intereſt and duty, it is abſolutely neceſſary to diſcover, firſt, what is the preceptive will of God, or, what God requires man to do.

This, Philoſophy can never accompliſh; and hence I aſſert it to be vain and deceitful in its Nature; vain with reſpect to the end at which it aims, and deceitful with reſpect to the means which it employs, and the concluſions which it labours to eſtabliſh.

There are three methods, in which, it has been ſuppoſed, mankind may obtain the knowledge of the Preceptive Will of God, and of courſe of their own intereſt and duty.

I. By Immediate Revelation.

II. By Arguing analogically from his Providential Diſpenſations.

III. By Arguing from a ſuppoſed Character of God, either derived from his works, or determined *a priori*.

The

The firſt of theſe methods lies out of the preſent queſtion. The two remaining ones I propoſe now to examine; and aſſert

1. That Analogical Argumentation from the Providence of God can never teach us his Preceptive Will, except in a manner greatly imperfect and unſatisfactory.

In Philoſophy, thus directed, we always argue from what God has done to what he will do: i. e. from the paſt and preſent ſtate of his Providence we undertake to determine what his deſigns are, and how they will terminate; and hence derive our concluſions concerning the Will of God, or that Law, by which our conduct ought to be regulated. This method of Philoſophizing is attended with inſuperable difficulties.

In the 1ſt place, we know but a very ſmall number of the beings and events which have exiſted; but, to form juſt views of the real ſcope of Providence, we ought to know every being and every event. To underſtand the true character of a complicated machine, we muſt underſtand the nature, and the operations, of every part. He who knows but one in a thouſand of ſuch parts, and has ſeen the operations of that one part only, would be thought wholly deſtitute of common ſenſe, were he to boaſt of a thorough knowledge of the whole. The great machine of Providence is infinitely more complex, the proportion of the parts unknown to thoſe which are known is infinitely greater, and the approximation to the knowledge of the whole infinitely leſs than in the machine ſuppoſed. What then muſt be the character of him, who boaſts of a thorough knowledge of Providence?

2. We know not thoroughly the nature of thoſe beings and events with which we are beſt acquainted. The nature of every being, and of every event, ſo far as the preſent queſtion is concerned, depends chiefly, or perhaps with more propriety wholly, on its

its connections with others? What are the uſes of this being, or this event? What are the purpoſes which it is deſigned to accompliſh? are the queſtions which are ever intended to be ſolved in our enquiries of this nature. But theſe queſtions Philoſophy can never ſatisfactorily ſolve. The immediate uſes and purpoſes are, indeed, frequently obvious; but thoſe, which lie at a very little diſtance, are, for the moſt part, unknown. Bread, we know will nouriſh man; and ſafely determine, that bread was formed for this end; But why man exiſts at all, why he thus exiſts, and why he is thus to be nouriſhed, we know not. That which we know, avails not, therefore, to the purpoſe in view.

All intermediate and ſubordinate ends in Creation and Providence are capable of being underſtood only by the knowledge of the ultimate end: i. e. the purpoſe, in which all earthly things terminate. To this end all things directly tend; with it all are indiſſolubly connected; and for it all are deſigned, and brought into being. But this end is wholly unknown. If it exiſt on this ſide the grave, it has never been conjectured. If it exiſts beyond the grave it can only be conjectured; for we can only conjecture whether man will exiſt beyond the grave. The ultimate end of all earthly things being therefore wholly unknown, the true nature of all preceding ſubordinate ends is alſo unknown, and of courſe the real ſcope of Providence.

In ſuch a ſtate of things Analogies muſt plainly be of little uſe. The arguments, which they actually furniſh, are all direct corroboratives of the Scriptural ſyſtem of Theology and Morality. Without the Scriptures, they are a labyrinth without a clue. No higher proof need be given of this, than the diſcordant and contradictory explanations of them, adopted by Philoſophers; no two of whom, either ancient or modern, agree in their conſtructions of Providence.

How ridiculous an employment would it be thought in a Clown, ſhould he undertake to interpret the deſigns of a Stateſman in the management of a great empire; to determine from what he had done what he would hereafter do; and to decide on his own duty and that of his fellow ſubjects, from a conſtruction of the analogies, which he ſuppoſed himſelf to obſerve in the conduct of the Ruler? Yet the Clown is infinitely nearer to the Stateſman, in underſtanding, than the Philoſopher to the Supreme Ruler; and infinitely more able to comprehend the analogies, viſible in the government of an empire, than the Philoſopher thoſe, which appear in the government of the Univerſe.

3. The Character of God cannot be perfectly known from Creation and Providence.

Of the truth of this aſſertion I am entirely convinced; yet I ſhall decline attempting a diſcuſſion of it at this time; becauſe the occaſion will not allow me to enter into ſo wide a field; and becauſe you have, not long ſince, heard my opinions and arguments at large, in diſcourſes profeſſedly formed on this ſubject. Such a diſcuſſion it ought further to be obſerved, is wholly unneceſſary for the preſent purpoſe; as Philoſophers have totally diſagreed concerning that Character of God, which is ſuppoſed to be viſible in his works; and as the prevailing Philoſophy wholly denies the exiſtence of ſuch a Being.

The only poſſible means of diſcovering the Will or Law of God which can be furniſhed by his works, are either his Deſigns or his Character. I flatter myſelf that it has been proved, that his deſigns can never be learned from his works. If his character be alſo undiſcoverable from this ſource, the concluſion is certain, that his Law muſt alſo be undiſcoverable. If his Character can be learned imperfectly only, his Law muſt, at the utmoſt, be known in a degree equally imperfect. If his Character be uncertain, his law muſt be at leaſt equally uncertain: and that his

Character

Character is uncertain, ſo far as his works diſcloſe it, and Philoſophy has diſcovered it, cannot be denied by any one acquainted at all with the diſcordant opinions of Philoſophers. Of courſe, the concluſion muſt be admitted, that to Philoſophy the Law of God, and the Duty, and ſupreme Intereſt, of man, muſt, ſo far as this method of inveſtigation is relied on, be undiſcoverable. Thus Man, as a ſubject of the divine government, cannot, by Philoſophy ever thoroughly know from this ſource of proof what is that conduct which he is bound to obſerve in order to pleaſe God and obtain his favour.

The view of this ſubject here given, does, however, by no means exhibit the greateſt difficulty under which Philoſophy labours. Man is not only a ſubject of the divine government, and therefore in the higheſt degree concerned to know the divine Law, that he may obey it; but he is alſo a rebel ſubject, and therefore in the higheſt degree concerned to diſcover the means of reſtoration to the favour of God. Man has violated ſuch precepts of the divine Law, as either by Revelation or Common Senſe, are diſcovered and acknowledged: ſuch precepts, for inſtance, as require him to be thankful to his Maker, and ſincere, juſt, and kind, to his fellow men. Theſe things may be conſidered here, as certainly known to be parts of the Law of God; becauſe thoſe Philoſophers, who acknowledge a God, generally agree, that theſe are plainly duties of man. But all men have violated the precepts, which require theſe things. The firſt intereſt of all men is, therefore, to obtain a knowledge of the means, if there be any, of reconciliation to God, and reinſtatement in the character and privileges of faithful ſubjects. To be thus reconciled, and reinſtated, men muſt be pardoned; and pardon is an act of mere Mercy. But of the Mercy of God there are no proofs in his providence. Could we then diſcover the Law of God, by examining his works, the knowledge of it would

would avail nothing to our future well being. That we are ſinners cannot be diſputed; and, ſo far as Philoſophy can diſcover, ſinners muſt be condemned, and puniſhed.

II. Arguments, drawn from a ſuppoſed character of God, whether derived from his works, or determined *a priori*, labour under difficulties equally great.

1. It is impoſſible to determine the character of God by arguments *a priori*.

The celebrated Doctor CLARKE has indeed attempted thus to prove the divine character; and his attempt is a ſpecimen of very reſpectable talents, and of the moſt laudable deſigns. Yet I cannot but think it has failed. The very words *necessary* and *necessity*, which are ſo important to his ſcheme, are not, I apprehend, uſed by him with any clear, preciſe meaning. Perhaps I ought rather to ſay, that I cannot perceive any ſuch meaning in his manner of uſing them. From his illuſtrations I ſhould believe, that he means nothing more by neceſſary exiſtence, than exiſtence merely. He does not appear to me to have proved even the Unity of God; and unleſs this can be evinced, I am doubtful whether it will be poſſible to prove the perfect character of the Godhead. As his is the only reſpectable effort of this kind which I have ſeen, it is unneceſſary for me to take notice of any other.

2. Should the character of God be ſuppoſed completely aſcertained from what he has done, or fully determined *a priori*; ſtill, inſurmountable difficulties would attend every attempt to gain from this ſource, the object aimed at by Philoſophy.

The only character of God which can be here admitted, is that of Infinite Perfection. The deſigns of a being infinitely perfect, muſt be formed to extend through eternity and immenſity; and muſt embrace all beings and all events, together with all their relations and operations. That therefore, which

by

by itſelf would be a wholly improper part of Creation, or Providence, might, from its relation to the whole great work be entirely proper. In the ſight of him who perfectly knows all things that may be beautiful, excellent, and neceſſary, as a part of the ſyſtem, which to every one who knows a part, and a very ſmall part only, of the whole number of things, would appear deformed and uſeleſs. How many meaſures in Government, how many even in the private affairs of an individual appear to us to be neceſſary and uſeful when we are thoroughly informed of their neceſſity and uſe; which, when we are uninformed, appear to be unneceſſary and injurious? How much more muſt this fact exiſt in the ſyſtem of the univerſe? He who ſees all things perfectly, muſt decide concerning all, according to their whole influence and tendency; we, according to their inſulated character or their immediate conſequences.

Theſe obſervations are abundantly ſupported by the real ſtate of Creation and Providence. The exiſtence of Moral and Natural evil; the death of half mankind under the age of five years; the uſeleſſneſs to the human eye of moſt animals and vegetables; the redundance of water on the globe; and the frozen, burnt, or otherwiſe barren ſtate of the land; are all, things wholly proper in the Creation and Providence of God, becauſe they exiſt; and his Agency in their exiſtence, in whatever degree exerted, is wholly worthy of his character. Yet ſo far as we are able to judge, few things could be more improper parts of a work, formed by Infinite Perfection.

Thus in its Nature muſt this Philoſophy be vain and deceitful. I ſhall now attempt to ſhew, that in fact, it has from the beginning been of this unhappy character. This will appear in the

I. Place in the diſcordance and contradictorineſs of its doctrines.

According to Themiſtius, there were more than three hundred ſects of the weſtern Philoſophers, dif-

ering greatly on ſubjects of high importance. According to Varro, there were two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions entertained by them concerning the ſummum bonum, or chief good; and three hundred opinions concerning God; or, as Varro himſelf declares, three hundred Jupiters, or ſupreme deities. Critias, Theodotus, Diagoras, the Pyrrhoniſts, New Academics, and Epicureans, were generally either Sceptics, or Atheiſts.

Ariſtotle denied the Creation of the Univerſe, and the Providence of God, ſo far as this world is concerned.

The Stoics, and various others, taught that God was fire.

Parmenides held, that God was partly fire and partly water.

Xenophanes, that Matter generally conſidered, was God.

Others held, that God was the Anima mundi, the Soul of the world.

Socrates and Plato taught the exiſtence of one God, and taught and practiſed the worſhip of the numerous Gods of their country.

Cicero and Plutarch held, that there were two ſupreme Gods, one good, the other evil.

Theſe inſtances are ſufficient to ſhew how the greateſt and moſt accurate Philoſophers of Antiquity thought concerning this moſt important ſubject; and to prove that not the leaſt reliance can be ſafely placed in our religious concerns on the concluſions of Philoſophy.

This variety and diſcordance of doctrines among Philoſophers, exceedingly perplexed and diſtreſſed in many inſtances, the Philoſophers themſelves; while it wholly deſtroyed their authority as inſtructors, among the people at large.

Plato, in his Epinomis, ſays, under a ſtrong conviction, as it would ſeem, of the imperfection of his own Philoſophy, "Let no man preſume to teach, if God do not lead the way." Cicero

Cicero, de nat. deor. makes Cotta find fault with thoſe who labour to prove the exiſtence of the Gods, by arguments; declaring, that they thus make the doctrine doubtful; whereas the traditions of their anceſtors had rendered it certain.

Plutarch declares, that no argument reſpecting religious belief is more to be depended on than the tradition of anceſtors.

Plato declares, that there are, by nature, no ſuch things as juſt things; ſince men always differ about them, and contrive continually new ſtandards of right and wrong; and that therefore there can be no law, unleſs God ſhould give it to us.

Porphyry confeſſes his conviction, that ſome univerſal method of delivering men's ſouls was needed, which no ſect of Philoſophers had yet found out.

Modern Philoſophers, notwithſtanding they have enjoyed the light of Revelation, and have derived from the Scriptures all their defenſible moral tenets, are yet, when they leave the doctrines of Revelation, very little better united.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the firſt conſiderable Engliſh, Deiſtical Philoſopher, and clearly one of the greateſt and beſt, declares the following things: viz.

That Chriſtianity is the beſt Religion:

That his own Univerſal Religion of Nature agrees wholly with Chriſtianity, and contributes to its eſtabliſhment:

That all Revealed Religion (viz. Chriſtianity) is abſolutely uncertain, and of little or no uſe:

That Men are not haſtily, or on ſmall grounds, to be condemned, who are led to ſin by bodily conſtitution:

That the indulgence of luſt, and of anger, is no more to be blamed than the thirſt occaſioned by the Dropſy; or the ſleepineſs produced by the Lethargy:

That it is our duty to worſhip God by prayer and praiſe, by repentance and holineſs, by reformation

of heart and of life; and that this is indiſpenſably neceſſary to our acceptance with God:

That the ſoul is immortal; that there will be a future retribution, which will be according to the works and thoughts of mankind; and that he who denies theſe truths, is ſcarcely to be accounted a reaſonable creature:

That his own Univerſal Religion is, and ever has been, clearly known to all men:

That to the Gentiles (i. e. to almoſt all men) it was principally unknown:

And, notwithſtanding the declarations already mentioned in favour of Chriſtianity, he accuſes all pretences to revelation of folly and unreaſonableneſs, and rejects with contempt its capital doctrines.

Mr. HOBBES declares,

That the Scriptures are the Voice of God; and yet

That they are of no authority, except as enjoined by the Civil Magiſtrate:

That inſpiration is a ſupernatural gift, and the immediate hand of God; and yet

That it is madneſs:

That the Scriptures are the foundation of all obligation; and yet

That they are of no obligatory force, except as enjoined by the Civil Magiſtrate:

That a ſubject may believe Chriſt in his heart; and yet

May lawfully deny him before the Magiſtrate:

That God exiſts; and yet

That that, which is not Matter, is nothing:

That worſhip, prayer, and praiſe are due to God; and yet

That all religion is ridiculous:

That the civil or municipal Law is the only foundation of right and wrong:

That, where there is no civil law, every man's judgment is the only ſtandard of right and wrong:

That the Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth,

truth, or juſtice; and can do no wrong to his ſubjects:

That every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them, if he can:

That Man is a mere machine: and

That the Soul is material and mortal.

Mr. BLOUNT declares,

That there is one infinite and eternal God; and yet inſinuates,

That there are two eternal, independent Beings:

That the one God is the Creator of all things; and yet inſinuates,

That the world was not created, but eternal:

That God ought to be worſhipped with prayer and praiſe; yet,

He objects to prayer as a duty:

That Chriſtianity is ſafer than Deiſm; and yet

That Revelation is not ſufficiently ſupported, becauſe men differ about it: (Of courſe, no moral doctrine is ſufficiently ſupported; for men differ about every ſuch doctrine.)

That the Soul is immortal, and will be rewarded hereafter, according to its works done here; and yet,

That the Soul is probably material, and of courſe, mortal:

Still he ſays, that we ought to obey God in the practice of virtue;

And that we ought to repent, and truſt in the mercy of God for pardon.

Lord SHAFTESBURY declares,

That the belief of future rewards and puniſhments is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it;

That the hope of rewards, and the fear of puniſhments, makes virtue mercenary;

That to be influenced by rewards, is diſingenuous and ſervile; and

That the hope of reward cannot conſiſt with virtue; and yet

That

That the hope of rewards is not derogatory to virtue, but a proof that we love virtue ;

That the hope of rewards, and the fear of puniſhments, however mercenary it may be accounted, is, in many inſtances, a great advantage, ſecurity, and ſupport, of virtue ; and

That all obligation to be virtuous ariſes from the advantages (i. e. the rewards) of virtue, and from the diſadvantages (i. e. the puniſhments) of vice :

That thoſe are cenſurable, who repreſent the Goſpel as a fraud, (or impoſition ;)

That he hopes the diſcourſes of Doctor Whichcot will reconcile the enemies of Chriſtianity to it, and make Chriſtians prize it more highly than before; and

That he hopes Chriſtians will be ſecured againſt the temper of the irreconcileable enemies of the faith of the Goſpel ; and yet

He repreſents ſalvation as a ridiculous thing ; and inſinuates

That Chriſt was influenced and directed by deep deſigns of ambition, and cheriſhed a ſavage zeal and perſecuting ſpirit ; and

That the Scriptures were a mere artful invention, to ſecure a profitable monopoly (i. e. of ſiniſter advantages to the inventors :)

That Man is born to religion, piety, and adoration, as well as to honour and friendſhip ;

That virtue is not compleat without piety ; yet

He labours to make virtue wholly independent of piety :

That all the warrant for the authority of Religious ſymbols (i. e. the Inſtitutions of Chriſtianity) is the authority of the Magiſtrate :

That the Magiſtrate is the ſole judge of religious Truth, and of Revelation :

That miracles are ridiculous ; and

That, if true, they would be no proof of the truth of Revelation :

That Ridicule is the teſt of truth ; and yet

That

That Ridicule itſelf muſt be brought to the teſt of Reaſon:

That the Chriſtian Religion ought to be received when eſtabliſhed by the Magiſtrate; yet

He groſsly ridicules it, where it was thus eſtabliſhed:

That Religion and Virtue appear to be ſo nearly connected, that they are preſumed to be inſeparable companions; and yet

That Atheiſts often conduct ſo well, as to ſeem to force us to confeſs them virtuous:

That he, who denies a God, ſets up an opinion againſt the very well-being of ſociety; and yet

That Atheiſm has no direct natural tendency to take away a juſt ſenſe of right and wrong:

That Atheiſm is greatly deficient in promoting virtue; and

That the natural tendency of it is to take away a juſt ſenſe of right and wrong.

Mr. Collins, though chiefly a mere objector to Revelation, declares,

That Man is a mere machine:

That the Soul is material and mortal:

That Chriſt and his apoſtles built on the predictions of fortune-tellers and divines;

That the Prophets were mere fortune-tellers and diſcoverers of loſt goods;

That Chriſtianity ſtands wholly on a falſe foundation; yet

He ſpeaks reſpectfully of Chriſtianity; and alſo of the Epicureans, whom he at the ſame time conſiders as Atheiſts.

Mr. Woolston, alſo a mere objector, declares,

That he is the fartheſt of any man from being engaged in the cauſe of Infidelity;

That Infidelity has no place in his heart;

That he writes for the honour of Jeſus, and in defence of Chriſtianity; and

That his deſign in writing is to advance the Meſſiahſhip,

ſiahſhip, and Truth, of the holy Jeſus; "To whom," he ſays, "be glory for ever, amen." and yet,

That the Goſpels are full of incredibilities, impoſſibilities, and abſurdities;

That they reſemble Gulliverian tales of perſons and things, which out of romance never had a being;

That the miracles, recorded in the Goſpels, taken literally, will not abide the teſt of Reaſon and Common Senſe; but muſt be rejected, and the authority of Jeſus along with them;

At the ſame time, he caſts the moſt ſcurrilous reflections on Chriſt.

Dr. TINDAL declares,

That Chriſtianity, ſtripped of the additions, which miſtake, policy, and circumſtances, have made to it, is a moſt holy religion; and yet,

That the Scriptures are obſcure, and fit only to perplex men, and that the two great parts of them are contradictory:

That all the Doctrines of Chriſtianity plainly ſpeak themſelves to be the will of an infinitely wiſe and holy God; and yet,

That the Precepts of Chriſtianity are looſe, undetermined, incapable of being underſtood by mankind at large, give wrong and unworthy apprehenſions of God, and are generally falſe and pernicious:

That Natural Religion is ſo plain to all, even the moſt ignorant, men, that God could not make it plainer; even if he were to convey, miraculouſly, the very ſame ideas to all men; and yet,

That almoſt all mankind have had very unworthy notions of God, and very wrong apprehenſions of Natural Religion:

That the principles of Natural Religion are ſo clear, that men cannot poſſibly miſtake them; and yet,

That almoſt all men have groſſly miſtaken them, and imbibed a ſuperſtition worſe than Atheiſm.

That Natural Religion is unalterable; that nothing

thing can be either added, or diminiſhed; and that it is neceſſarily known to all men; and yet,

That the goodneſs, or wickedneſs, of all actions is wholly meaſured by their tendency; that this tendency is wholly to be judged of by every man, according to his circumſtances; and that theſe circumſtances are continually changing:

That one rule is formed by God for every man; and yet,

That every Man muſt form a rule for himſelf.

Mr. CHUBB declares,

That he hopes to ſhare with his friends in the favour of God, in that peaceful and happy ſtate, which God hath prepared for the virtuous and faithful, in ſome other future world; and yet,

That God does not interpoſe in the affairs of this world, at all, and has nothing to do with the good, or evil, done by men here:

That Prayer may be uſeful, as a poſitive Inſtitution, by introducing proper thoughts, affections, and actions; and yet he intimates,

That it muſt be diſpleaſing to God, and directly improper:

That a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, hereafter, is one of the truths, which are of the higheſt concern to men; and yet,

That the arguments for the immortality of the Soul are wholly unſatisfactory; and that the Soul is probably matter:

That men are accountable to God for all their conduct, and will certainly be judged and dealt with, according to the truth and reality of their reſpective caſes; and yet,

That men will not be judged for their impiety or ingratitude to God, nor for their injuſtice and unkindneſs to each other; but only for voluntary injuries to the public; and that even this is unneceſſary and uſeleſs:

That God may kindly reveal to the world, when

greatly vitiated by error and ignorance, truths neceſſary to be known, and precepts neceſſary to be obeyed; and yet,

That ſuch a Revelation would be, of courſe, uncertain and uſeleſs:

That Chriſt's Miſſion is, at leaſt in his view, probably divine; and yet,

That Chriſt, in his opinion, was of no higher character, than the Founder of the Chriſtian ſect (i. e. another Sadoc, Cerinthus, or Herbert):

That Chriſt was ſent into the world to acquaint mankind with the Revelation of the will of God; and yet,

That his birth and reſurrection were ridiculous, and incredible; and that his inſtitutions and precepts were leſs excellent than thoſe of other teachers and lawgivers:

That the New Teſtament, particularly the Writings of the Apoſtles, contain excellent cautions and inſtructions for our right conduct; and

That the New Teſtament yields much clearer light than any other traditionary Revelation; and yet,

That the New Teſtament has contributed to the perplexity and confuſion of mankind, and exhibits doctrines heretical, diſhonorary to God, and injurious to men; and

That the Apoſtles were impoſtors; and that the Goſpels and Acts of the Apoſtles reſemble Jewiſh fables and Popiſh legends, rather than accounts of facts:

That as, on the Chriſtian ſcheme, Chriſt will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, he has not on this account (i. e. admitting this to be true) any diſagreeable apprehenſions on account of what he has written; and yet,

He ridicules the birth and reſurrection of Chriſt, poſtpones his inſtructions to thoſe of the Heathen Philoſophers and Lawgivers, aſſerts his doctrines to be diſhonorary to God and injurious to mankind,

and

and allows him, not to be ſinleſs; but merely, not a groſs ſinner.

He further declares,

That the Reſurrection of Chriſt, if true, proves not the immortality of the Soul:

That the belief of a future ſtate is of no advantage to ſociety:

That all Religions are alike:

That it is of no conſequence what Religion a man embraces:

And he allows not any room for dependance on God's Providence, truſt in him, and reſignation to his will, as parts of duty, or religion.

Mr. HUME declares,

That there is no perceptible connection between cauſe and effect;

That the belief of ſuch connection is merely a matter of cuſtom;

That experience can ſhew us no ſuch connection;

That we cannot with any reaſon conclude, that, becauſe an effect has taken place once, it will take place again;

That it is uncertain and uſeleſs to argue from the courſe of nature, and infer an Intelligent Cauſe;

That we cannot, from any analogy of nature, argue the exiſtence of an Intelligent Cauſe of all things;

That there is no reaſon to believe that the Univerſe proceeded from a Cauſe;

That there are no ſolid arguments to prove the exiſtence of a God;

That experience can furniſh no argument concerning matters of fact, is in this caſe uſeleſs, and can give riſe to no inference; and

That there is no relation between cauſe and effect; and yet,

That Experience is our only guide in matters of fact and the exiſtence of objects;

That it is univerſally allowed, that nothing exiſts without a cauſe;

That

That every effect is ſo preciſely determined, that no other effect could, in ſuch circumſtances, have poſſibly reſulted from the operation of its cauſe;

That the relation of cauſe is abſolutely neceſſary to the propagation of our ſpecies, and the regulation of our conduct;

That voluntary actions are neceſſary, and determined by a fixed connection between cauſe and effect;

That motives are cauſes operating neceſſarily on the will;

That Man is a mere machine (i. e. an object operated on neceſſarily by external cauſes);

That there is no contingency (i. e. nothing happening without a ſettled cauſe) in the univerſe; and

That matter and motion may be regarded as the cauſe of thought (i. e. the Soul is a Material Cauſe and thought its effect):

That God diſcovers to us only faint traces of his character, and that it would be flattery, or preſumption to aſcribe to him any perfection which is not diſcovered to the full in his works (and of courſe, that it would be flattery or preſumption to aſcribe any perfection to God.

That it is unreaſonable to believe God to be wiſe and good;

That what we believe to be a perfection in God may be a defect. (i. e. Holineſs, Juſtice, Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Mercy, and Truth, may be defects in God); Of conſequence, Injuſtice, Folly, Malice, and Falſhood, may be excellencies in his character;

That no reward, or puniſhment, can be rationally expected, beyond what is already known by experience and obſervation:

That ſelf-denial, ſelf-mortification, and humility, are not virtues, but are uſeleſs and miſchievous; that they ſtupify the underſtanding, ſour the temper, and harden the heart (and of courſe are groſs crimes:)

That

That pride and ſelf-valuation, ingenuity, eloquence, quickneſs of thought, eaſineſs of expreſſion, delicacy of taſte, ſtrength of body, health, cleanlineſs, taper legs and broad ſhoulders, are virtues:

That Suicide, or ſelf-murder, is lawful and commendable (and of courſe virtuous:)

That Adultery muſt be practiſed, if we would obtain all the advantages of life:

That Female Infidelity (or Adultery) when known is a ſmall thing; when unknown, nothing: and

That Scepticiſm is the true and only wiſdom of man.* Lord

* The following ſummary of Mr. Hume's doctrines, publiſhed ſome years before his death, Biſhop Horne ſays, was never, ſo far as he could find, queſtioned, as to its fidelity or accuracy, either by Mr. Hume, or his friends.

A Summary of Mr. Hume's Doctrines, Metaphyſical and Moral.

Of the Soul.

That the ſoul of man is not the ſame this moment, that it was the laſt: that we know not what it is; that it is not one, but many things, and that it is nothing at all.

That in this ſoul is the agency of all the cauſes that operate throughout the ſenſible creation; and yet that in this ſoul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either.

That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cauſe of thought.

Of the Univerſe.

That the external world does not exiſt, or at leaſt, that its exiſtence may reaſonably be doubted.

That the univerſe exiſts in the mind, and that the mind does not exiſt.

That the univerſe is nothing but a heap of perceptions, without a ſubſtance.

That though a man could bring himſelf to believe, yea, and have reaſon to believe, that every thing in the univerſe proceeds from ſome cauſe; yet it would be unreaſonable for him to believe, that the univerſe itſelf proceeds from a cauſe.

Of Human Knowledge.

That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt.

That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea, of our doubts themſelves, and therefore, the utmoſt that Philoſophy can do, is to give us a doubtful ſolution of doubtful doubts.

That the human underſtanding, acting alone, does entirely ſubvert itſelf, and prove by argument that by argument, nothing can be proved.

That

Lord BOLINGBROKE declares,

That Power and Wiſdom are the only attributes of God, which can be diſcovered by mankind; and yet,

That he is as far from denying the Juſtice, as the Power, of God; that his Goodneſs is manifeſt: At the ſame time, he aſcribes every other Perfection to God, as well as Wiſdom and Power, and ſays, this is rational:

That

That man, in all his perceptions, actions and volitions, is a mere paſſive machine, and has no ſeparate exiſtence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the exiſtence of which he is by no means certain; and yet, that the nature of all things depends ſo much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce heat, nor the ſun light, without an act of the human underſtanding.

Of God.

That it is unreaſonable to believe God to be infinitely wiſe and good, while there is any evil or diſorder in the univerſe.

That we have no good reaſon to think the univerſe proceeds from a cauſe.

That as the exiſtence of the external world is queſtionable, we are at a loſs to find arguments by which we may prove the exiſtence of the Supreme Being, or any of his attributes.

That when we ſpeak of Power, as an attribute of any being, God himſelf not excepted, we uſe words without meaning.

That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with power, *much leſs* of one endued with infinite power; and that we can never have reaſon to believe, that any object or quality of any object exiſts, of which we cannot form an idea.

Of the Morality of Human Actions.

That every human action is neceſſary, and could not have been different from what it is.

That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues are nearly of the ſame kind—In other words, that to want honeſty, and to want underſtanding, and to want a leg, are equally the objects of moral diſapprobation.

That adultery muſt be practiſed, if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practiſed, it would in time ceaſe to be ſcandalous; and, that, if practiſed ſecretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all.

Laſtly, as the ſoul of man, according to Mr. Hume, becomes every moment a different being, the conſequence muſt be, that the crimes committed by him at one time cannot be imputable to him at another.

That the Wiſdom of God is merely a natural attribute, and in no ſenſe moral; and yet,

That the Wiſdom of God operates in chooſing what is fitteſt to be done; (Of courſe, it is a moral attribute; involving perfect moral rectitude, as well as perfect knowledge;)

That God is gracious and beneficent:

That whatever God has done is juſt and good;

That ſuch moral perfections are in God, as Chriſtians aſcribe to him; yet

He cenſures divines for aſcribing theſe perfections to God:

That we learn from our own Power and Wiſdom, the Power and Wiſdom of God; and yet,

That it is profane, to aſcribe the excellencies of our nature to God, although without limit or imperfection:

He undertakes to defend the Righteouſneſs of God againſt divines; and yet aſſerts,

That Holineſs and Righteouſneſs in God are like nothing in men; that they cannot be conceived of by men, nor argued about with any certainty; and that to talk of imitating God in his moral attributes is blaſphemy:

That God made all things; and yet,

That he did not determine the exiſtence of particular men: (Of courſe, he did not determine the exiſtence of any man; all men being particular men).

That he will not preſume to deny, that there have been Particular Providences; and yet,

That there is no foundation for the belief of any ſuch providences; and that it is abſurd and profane to aſſert or believe, them:

That God is juſt; and that juſtice requires, that rewards and puniſhment, be meaſured to particular caſes, according to their circumſtances, in proportion to the merit, or demerit, of every individual; and yet,

That God doth not ſo meaſure out rewards, or puniſhments;

puniſhments; and that, if he did, he would ſubvert human affairs; that he concerns not himſelf with the affairs of men at all; or, if he does, that he regards only collective bodies of men, not individuals; that he puniſhes none except through the Magiſtrate; and that there will be no ſtate of future rewards, or puniſhments:

That divines are deſerving of cenſure for ſaying, that God made man to be happy; and yet he aſſerts,

That God made man to be happy here; and that the end of the human ſtate is happineſs:

That the Religion of nature is clear and obvious to all mankind; and yet,

That it has been unknown to the greateſt part of mankind:

That we know Material ſubſtance, and are aſſured of it; and yet,

That we know nothing of either Matter or Spirit:

That there is, undeniably, ſomething in our conſtitution, beyond the known properties of matter; and yet,

That the Soul is material and mortal; and that to ſay, the Soul is immaterial is the ſame thing as to ſay, that two and two are five:

That ſelf-love is the great Law of our nature; and yet,

That Univerſal Benevolence is the great Law of our nature:

That Chriſtianity is a republication of the Religion of Nature, and a benevolent ſyſtem; that its morals are pure; and that he is determined to ſeek for genuine Chriſtianity with the ſimplicity of ſpirit, with which Chriſt himſelf taught it in the Goſpel; and yet,

A great Part of his Works, particularly of his Philoſophical Works, was written for no other end, but to deſtroy Chriſtianity.

He alſo declares,

That there is no conſcience in man; except artificially: That

That it is more natural to believe many Gods than to believe One:

He teaches, that Ambition, the Luſt of Power, Avarice, and Senſuality, may be lawfully gratified, if they can be ſafely gratified:

That the ſole foundation of Modeſty is vanity, or a wiſh to ſhew ourſelves ſuperior to mere animals.

That Man lives only in the preſent world;

That Man is only a ſuperior animal:

That Man's chief end is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the fleſh:

That Modeſty is inſpired by mere prejudice:

That Polygamy is a part of the Law, or Religion, of Nature. He intimates alſo,

That Adultery is no violation of the Law, or Religion, of Nature:

That there is no wrong in Lewdneſs, except in the higheſt Inceſt:

That the Law or Religion of Nature forbids no Inceſt, except between the neareſt Relations: and plainly ſuppoſes,

That all Men and Women are unchaſte, and that there is no ſuch thing as Conjugal Fidelity:

Theſe doctrines will ſerve as a ſpecimen of the Philoſophy, which actually exiſts. Volumes would be neceſſary for even a ſummary account of all its diverſities. I need only obſerve further, that, with reſpect to the Exiſtence, Character, and Providence, of God, Philoſophers differ wholly. Moſt of the Infidels of the preſent age entirely deny his exiſtence, and treat the belief of it as a contemptible abſurdity. Voltaire, at firſt, believed in a finite God; but in his old age, doubted of the exiſtence of any God. Toland believed the world to be God. Many of them ſuppoſe him to reſemble the Gods of Epicureans, to be totally abſorbed in pleaſure and quietude, and to be utterly unconcerned with the creatures which, nevertheleſs, he has thought proper to make. Amid ſuch a diverſity and diſcordance, whom are you to

follow; and what are you to believe?

2dly. In the groſs and monſtrous Nature of its Doctrines.

Of this character were very many doctrines of the Ancient Philoſophers.

Zeno taught, that all crimes were equal; that we ought never to forgive injuries; and that the moſt abominable lewdneſs is lawful.

Both Zeno and Cleanthes taught, that Children may as lawfully roaſt and eat their parents, as any other food.

Diogenes, and the Cynics generally, taught, that Parents may lawfully facrifice and eat their Children; and that there is neither ſin nor ſhame in the groſſeſt and moſt public acts of lewdneſs.

Plato taught, that lewdneſs is juſtifiable; and

Cicero, that it is a crime of ſmall magnitude.

Lycurgus encouraged ſtealing by an expreſs Law.

Ariſtippus taught, that both theft and adultery are lawful.

Cicero, that it is lawful to make war for the ſake of fame, provided it be conducted without unneceſſary cruelty.

Cicero alſo taught, that Virtue conſiſts in the deſire of fame. Of courſe, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæſar, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, and Nadir Kouli Khan, were among the moſt virtuous of mankind.*

The occaſion will not allow me to ſwell the number of theſe ſpecimens of the ancient Philoſophy. I proceed therefore to obſerve, that the moderns have uttered numerous doctrines of a ſimilar character. Such is the Atheiſm, which they now conſider as the only rational and enlightened Philoſophy. Such is the Scepticiſm of Hume; the mortality and materiality of the Soul; the doctrine, that Man is a mere animal; that animal gratification is the chief end of our being; that right and wrong depend ſolely on

* For ſeveral of theſe doctrines ſee Deiſm Revealed.

on the deciſions of the magiſtrate; that ridicule is the teſt of truth; that we may lawfully get all things if we can get them ſafely; that modeſty is inſpired only by prejudice, and has its foundation in the mere deſire of appearing to be ſuperior to animals; that Adultery is lawful according to the Religion of Nature; that there is no wrong in lewdneſs, except in the higheſt Inceſt; that God exerciſes no Providence over mankind; and that holineſs, juſtice, goodneſs, and truth, may be defects in the Divine character. All theſe, and many others already recited, are doctrines as repugnant to Common ſenſe, and Common good, and fraught with as much impiety and irreverence to God, and as much evil to mankind, as any doctrines which can be propoſed. When we view the pernicious tendency of theſe doctrines (and theſe are the ſubſtance of the modern Philoſophy) we may ſafely ſay, that, thoroughly practiſed, they would overwhelm this world with that miſery which the Scriptures exhibit as experienced only in hell. When we contemplate the folly of theſe doctrines, we may with the utmoſt propriety apply to the modern Philoſophers what Cicero ſays of their predeceſſors; viz. that he knows not how it comes to paſs, that, when any man utters an abſurdity ever ſo groſs, he preſently finds the ſame abſurdity to have been delivered by ſome one of the Philoſophers.

3. In its total inefficacy to reform either themſelves, or their Diſciples.

Cicero declares, that the ancient Philoſophers never reformed either themſelves or their diſciples; and that he knew not a ſingle inſtance, in which either the teacher or the Diſciple was made virtuous by their principles.* Lucian declares them, as a body, to have been tyrants, adulterers, and corrupters of youth. Plutarch declares Socrates and Plato to have been as incontinent, and intemperate, as any ſlave; and Ariſtotle to have been a fop, a debaucher, and

* See Deiſm Revealed.

and a traitor. Dion Caſſius gives no better character of Seneca. Diogenes and Crates committed lewdneſs, without a bluſh, in the ſtreets; doubtleſs believing, with Lord Bolingbroke, that modeſty was inſpired by mere prejudice. Speuſippus, who appears to have believed, with Mr. Hume, that adultery muſt be practiſed, if we would obtain all the advantages of life, was caught, and ſlain, in the act of adultery. Ariſtippus kept a ſeraglio of ſtrumpets and catamites, and perjured himſelf, to cheat a friend of a ſum of money, which that friend had left in his hands; and refuſed alſo to educate his own children, ſtyling them mere vermin. Menippus, becauſe he had loſt a ſum of money, murdered himſelf: as did alſo Zeno, Cleanthes, Chryſippus, Cleombrotus, Cato the younger, and Brutus. Cato the elder parted with his wife to Hortenſius, and was accuſed of drunkenneſs. Xenophon was a notorious ſodomite, and ſaid in the abſence of a boy whom he kept, "I would be blind to all things elſe, ſo that I might ſee Clinias:" and again, "thanks to the ſun which diſcloſes to me the face of Clinias." The ancient Philoſophers, indeed, were generally noted for ſodomy. Plutarch, acknowledging the fact, makes for them this apology, that, though they corrupted their bodies, they made amends for it by improving their ſouls. In truth, nothing better was to be expected from them than what is here recounted; for their doctrines warranted theſe and moſt other crimes.

Theſe are among the moſt reſpectable of thoſe men, whoſe theological and moral ſyſtems modern Philoſophers prefer to that of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. The morals of the Moderns have, in ſome inſtances, been more decent; in others, very little different.

The true character of all men may be certainly known by their opinions. No man is better than the moral opinions, which he holds, will make him,

if

if drawn out into life and practice. Few are in any meaſure ſo good. I do not deny, that men may be more decent, before their fellow-men, than the tendency of their doctrines would lead us to believe; but in this there is no principle, no virtue. All is the reſult of wiſhing to live agreeably, and to poſſeſs reputation. The worſt of all men have this deſire as really, and often as ſtrongly, as any others, even the moſt virtuous.

The doctrines of theſe Philoſophers, it will eaſily be ſeen, by even a ſlight recourſe to the account already given of them, forbids the belief, and the exiſtence, of virtue in thoſe who embrace them.

Lord Herbert declares, that the indulgence of *luſt* and anger is no more to be blamed, than the thirſt of a fever, or the drowſineſs of the Lethargy. In this ſingle ſentence, by a ſweeping ſtroke, the guilt of gluttony, ſloth, drunkenneſs, lewdneſs, wrath, contention, and revenge, is entirely blotted out.

Mr. Hobbes declares, that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them if he can;

Again, "A ſubject may lawfully deny Chriſt before the Magiſtrate, although he believes Chriſt in his heart;"

Again, "A Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or juſtice, and can do no wrong to his ſubjects;" and

Again, the Civil Law is the ſole foundation of good and evil, of right and wrong.

In the firſt of theſe declarations, mankind are let looſe upon each other, in all the hideous ways of fraud, theft, plunder, robbery, peculation, oppreſſive taxation, and piracy; in the ſecond, lying and perjury are completely authorized, as all ſuch denials were cuſtomarily made under oath; the third is an univerſal ſanction of all the horrid evils of deſpotiſm; and the fourth an entire annihilation of right and wrong, and of courſe of all morality.

Tindal has, alſo, ſet morality wholly afloat, in declaring,

declaring, that every man muſt form a rule for himſelf, a rule to be changed as circumſtances, always varying, ſhall change. Nor has Chubb left the ſubject at all more ſettled, or ſafe. He declares, that all religions are alike; that it is of no conſequence, what religion a man embraces; that the belief of a future ſtate is of no uſe to ſociety; and that God does not interpoſe in the affairs of this world at all, and has nothing to do with the good, or evil, done by men, here. The well-being of ſociety cannot be overthrown, nor morality deſtroyed, more effectually than by theſe opinions, ſhould they be made rules of human conduct. If all Religions, i. e. all ſyſtems of Moral and Theological doctrines, are alike, it is clearly either becauſe all are wholly true or wholly falſe, or becauſe all are proportionably true and falſe, or becauſe moral and theoligical truth is of no importance. The two firſt are plainly falſe ſuppoſitions, Mr. Chubb being the judge; for he has declared one ſyſtem to be true, viz. his own; and another to be falſe, viz. that of the Goſpel. Of courſe, the laſt is the true ſuppoſition as it ſtood in his mind. Of conſequence no doctrines are of any importance: in other words, Truth is of no uſe to man. Moral and theological truth is plainly more important to man, than any other; if this be of no ſignificance, none elſe can be: an opinion fitter for the mouth of a fiend, than for that of a man.

Nor are the two laſt declarations of his leſs fatal. No bond has ever holden mankind, none ever will hold them, together, beſide the belief of the preſence, and providence of God, and of an approaching ſtate of Rewards and puniſhments.

Shafteſbury, Hume, and Bolingbroke, have laboured, at leaſt equally, to deſtroy the belief of theſe doctrines, and have thus aimed the axe at the root of human happineſs.

Shafteſbury, alſo, when he aſſerts ſalvation to be ridiculous, the magiſtrate to be the ſole judge of religious

religious truth, Atheiſm not to take away a juſt ſenſe of right and wrong, and to be no way deficient in promoting virtue, unhinges all ſerious thinking, and all moral impreſſions, ſilences rational enquiry, and obliterates every diſtinction, which can uſefully regulate the conduct of intelligent beings.

The ſame confuſion is introduced by Hume, when he ranks bodily and intellectual endowments, and caſual attainments, with virtues, denies the virtuous nature of humility and ſelf-denial, and aſſerts that of pride, ſelf-valuation, and ſuicide.

But what ſhall be ſaid of this celebrated writer, when he gravely informs us, that Adultery muſt be practiſed, if we would obtain all the advantages of life. Muſt not plunder, falſehood, aſſaſſination, piracy, war, and tyranny, be alſo practiſed on the ſame principle. Were theſe or any other crimes ever practiſed, but for the ſake of advantages either obtained, or expected? What ſhall we ſay of him, when, from Rochefoucault, he repeats, and to ſhew his fondneſs for it, often, the maxim, that Female Infidelity, when known, is a ſmall thing, when unknown, nothing.

Bolingbroke has more openly and violently attacked every important truth and ſerious duty. Particularly he has licenſed lewdneſs, and cut up chaſtity and decency by the root.

What idea muſt be entertained of the morals of men, who aſſert theſe things, not in careleſs converſation, not in grave converſation, not in ſportive writings; but in ſolemn, didactic, Philoſophical treatiſes, ſitting in the chair of moral and religious inſtruction, ſpeaking to a world, uttering oracular opinions, deciding the duty and happineſs both temporal and eternal of the whole human race, and unfolding profeſſedly the will of the infinite God? They either believed, or diſbelieved, theſe doctrines. If they diſbelieved them, what apology can be made for ſo groſs and ſo miſchievous falſehood? If they

believed

believed them, the concluſion is irreſiſtibly forced upon us, that they practiſed as they believed. They have alſo laboured to the utmoſt to perſuade mankind both to believe and practiſe them. If their labours prove ſucceſsful, if their wiſhes ſhould be accompliſhed, the world will be converted into one theatre of falſehood, perjury, fraud, theft, piracy, robbery, oppreſſion, revenge, fornication, and adultery. What elſe is the hell of the Scriptures? Lewdneſs alone, extended as their doctrines extend it, would exterminate every moral feeling from the human breaſt, and every moral and virtuous action from the human conduct; Sodom would ceaſe to be a proverbial name; and Gommorrha would be remembered only to wonder at her unhappy lot, and to drop the tear of ſympathy upon her aſhes.

I know it is often ſaid; it will probably be ſaid in the preſent caſe: and perhaps by no ſmall number of perſons; that, provided a man is honeſt in his belief, he is to be conſidered as a virtuous man, unleſs his life diſprove the opinion of his virtue. If by this declaration it be intended, that the man in queſtion has faithfully ſought for truth, and as faithfully collected, duly weighed, and candidly admitted, all the evidence within his reach, I readily acknowledge, that he has done his duty, and is therefore in this inſtance undoubtedly virtuous. But that men who believe falſehood, and ſuch groſs and palpable falſehood, have really thus done, is yet to be proved.

If it be intended, that, when a man really believes error, he is, by the reality of his unbelief, conſtituted virtuous, I deny the doctrine wholly; and all thoſe, who aſſert it, deny it alſo. The Arabians, who, under the ſtandard of Mohammed, butchered half mankind, believed that they were doing what was right. Multitudes of Catholics, in the laſt century, unqueſtionably believed it to be the will of God, that they ſhould perjure themſelves, in their correſpondence with Huguenots; and that they ſhould

roaſt,

roaſt, diſlocate, and aſſaſſinate, that unhappy claſs of men by thouſands. Chriſtians have, beyond controverſy, really believed, in many inſtances, that the perſecution of Infidels was agreeable to the will of God. Cicero believed it to be right to have a civil war kindled in Rome, that he might return from exile. Numbers of people in Copenhagen, at a certain time, believed it to be right to murder their neighbours, that, under the horror of an approaching death, themſelves might be induced certainly to repent of ſin, and to gain eternal life. Alexander with full conviction of the rectitude of his deſigns, waſted the Perſian empire, and demanded divine homage to himſelf.

None of thoſe with whom I am diſputing, will pretend, that all theſe perſons were juſtified in their deſigns and conduct by the reality of their belief of its rectitude.

It will be further ſaid, as it often has been by others beſide Mr. Chubb, that what a man believes is of no importance. Infidel writers ought never to advance this doctrine: for their conduct in labouring ſo earneſtly to deſtroy the faith of Chriſtians, and to eſtabliſh that of Infidels, gives the lie to the declaration. If the aſſertion be true, a man may, according to the opinion of the aſſertors themſelves, as well be a Chriſtian in his belief, as an Infidel. But the aſſertion is not true; and they prove, by every page of their writings, and by every ſentence of their converſation, that they feel it to be falſe; for they labour with the greateſt induſtry, and ardour, to change the tenets of their fellow-men.

All the volitions of the mind are of courſe accordant with the prevailing dictates of the underſtanding; and all the actions of men ſpring from their volitions. Such, then, as is the moral nature of the opinions of a man, will be the nature of his moral conduct. Obedience to error is vice; obedience to truth is virtue. All men hold errors; and all men hold probably ſome moral truths. Good men obey,

mainly, the truths which they receive, and not the errors. Wicked men wholly obey, in their moral conduct, the errors which they adopt, and reject truth as a rule of conduct.

Complete virtue is formed by the reception and obedience of truth only. Such is the virtue of the heavenly inhabitants. In the preſent world ſuch virtue does not exiſt; for truth is not received by any man unmixed with error; nor is the truth, which is received, alone and perfectly obeyed. The moſt perfect earthly orthodoxy is, therefore, mingled with error, and the moſt perfect earthly virtue with vice. Hence extenſive room is furniſhed for the exerciſe of charitable regards to ſuch, as differ from us in many moral doctrines.

But this charity has its limits. The truths holden muſt, in this caſe, be fundamental truths; or thoſe on which virtue can reſt; and the errors muſt not be fundamental errors; or opinions ſubverſive of all virtue. The man, who ſeriouſly believes in the rectitude of lying, cruelty, fraud, lewdneſs, and impiety, cannot be virtuous.

The man, who is pleaſed with error, is, in the exerciſe of that emotion, guilty. To love the means of vice, or ſin, is the ſame thing in a moral view as to love ſin. Error is the certain means of ſin in every ſenſe. As a rule of conduct, it leads to nothing but ſin; as a temptation to ſin, it is of incalculable power; as a juſtification of ſin, it is of all opiates to the conſcience, and of all ſupports to the heart, beyond meaſure the greateſt. The man, who loves it, is therefore a guilty enemy to himſelf, a diſhonourer of the God of truth, and a deſtroyer of his own well-being. The man who deviſes, publiſhes, and with ingenuity defends it, is the common enemy of God and mankind. To the evil, which he does to the univerſe, no bounds can be fixed; and with all this evil he is chargeable. The ravages of Alexander were probably leſs injurious to the human race, and

leſs

leſs guilty before God, than the ravages of the moral world by Hume, or Voltaire.

Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftſbury, Woolſton, Tindal, Chubb, and Bolingbroke, are all guilty of the vile hypocriſy of profeſſing to love and reverence Chriſtianity, while they are employed in no other deſign than to deſtroy it. Such faithleſs profeſſions, ſuch groſs violations of truth, in Chriſtians, would have been proclaimed to the univerſe by theſe very writers as infamous deſertions of principle and decency. Is it leſs infamous in themſelves? All hypocriſy is deteſtable; but I know of none ſo deteſtable as that, which is coolly written, with full premeditation, by a man of talents, aſſuming the character of a moral and religious inſtructor, a miniſter, a prophet, of the truth of the infinite God. Truth is a virtue perfectly defined, mathematically clear, and completely underſtood by all men of common ſenſe. There can be no haltings between uttering truth and falſehood, no doubts, no miſtakes; as between piety and enthuſiaſm, frugality and parſimony, generoſity, and profuſion. Tranſgreſſion, therefore, is always a known, definite, deliberate villainy. In the ſudden moment of ſtrong temptation, in the hour of unguarded attack, in the flutter and trepidation of unexpected alarm, the beſt man may, perhaps, be ſurpriſed into any ſin; but he, who can coolly, of ſteady deſign, and with no unuſual impulſe, utter falſehood, and vend hypocriſy, is not far from finiſhed depravity.

The morals of Rocheſter and Wharton need no comment. Woolſton was a groſs blaſphemer. Blount ſolicited his ſiſter in law to marry him, and, being refuſed, ſhot himſelf. Tindal was originally a proteſtant, then turned papiſt, then proteſtant again, merely to ſuit the times; and was at the ſame time infamous for vice in general, and the total want of principle. He is ſaid to have died with this prayer in his mouth. "If there is a God, I deſire that he

may have mercy on me." Hobbes wrote his Leviathan, to ſerve the cauſe of Charles I.; but, finding him fail of ſucceſs, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this fact to the Uſurper; as Hobbes himſelf unbluſhingly declared to Lord Clarendon.* Morgan had no regard to truth; as is evident from his numerous falſifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile hypocriſy of profeſſing himſelf a Chriſtian in thoſe very writings in which he labours to deſtroy Chriſtianity. Voltaire, in a letter now remaining, requeſted his friend D'Alembert to tell for him a direct and palpable lie, by denying, that he was the author of the Philoſophical Dictionary. D'Alembert in his anſwer informed him, that he had told the lie. † Voltaire has indeed expreſſed his own moral character perfectly in the following words, "Monſieur Abbe, I muſt be read, no matter whether I am believed, or not." He alſo ſolemnly profeſſed to believe the Catholic Religion, although at the ſame time he doubted the exiſtence of a God. Hume died as a fool dieth. The day before his death he ſpent in a pitiful and affected unconcern about this tremendous ſubject, playing at whiſt, reading Lucian's dialogues, and making ſilly attempts at wit concerning his interview with Charon, the heathen ferry-man of Hades.‡

It will eaſily be ſuppoſed that my information concerning the private lives of theſe men muſt be diſtant and imperfect: What has been ſaid will, however, furniſh any one at all acquainted with the human character, with juſt ideas of their morality. I ſhall only add, that Rouſſeau (Jean Jacques) is aſſerted to have been guilty of groſs theft, perjury, fornication, and adultery; and of abjuring and aſſuming, alternately, the Catholic, and the Proteſtant, religion; neither of which he believed.

Thus

* See Deiſm Revealed.

† See Prieſtley on the Cauſes of the Increaſe of Infidelity.

‡ Smith's Life of Hume

Thus have I ſummarily exhibited to you the nature, and the actual ſtate, of this Philoſophy. From this view of it, I think you will unite with me in a full conviction, that, if the Goſpel had been liable to ſo many and ſo ſerious objections, it would, inſtead of exciting and ſuſtaining a controverſy through eighteen centuries, have ſolicited the faith and obedience of mankind in vain, would have been ſmothered in its birth, and only added one to the numerous moral ſyſtems, which have, for ages, ſlept the ſleep of death in the regions of oblivion.

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THE

THE NATURE AND DANGER OF INFIDEL PHILOSOPHY.

SERMON SECOND.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware, lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after CHRIST.

Secondly. I SHALL now endeavour to shew you, that, vain and deceitful as this Philosophy is, both in its nature and in fact, you are still in danger of becoming a prey to it.

This danger will arise from several sources. I shall specify those which appear to me to be of chief importance.

I. You will be exposed to this danger from the arguments, brought by Philosophers against the Scriptures.

Infidels will probably triumph, and you may be surprised, to find Arguments mentioned as a source of danger. But your surprise and their triumph are both without foundation.

Wherever arguments are fairly adduced, and questions thoroughly explored by reasoning, there can be no danger to truth, or to the friends of truth; for in every such investigation, truth must have decisive advantages over falsehood. But questions are not always so explored, nor arguments always so adduced. Ingenious and able men are not always candid men, nor always desirous of investigating or establishing truth. Their ingenuity is not unfrequently employed in obscuring, where it should illumine, and in perplexing, where it should clear. Ignorant persons may always be embarrassed by the reasonings of the learned and skilful, and those who

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are not verſed in any ſubject of controverſy, by ſtudied champions.

Many readers of this Philoſophy are ignorant; many impatient of thorough inveſtigation, and accuſtomed to depend for their opinions on others; to be ſwayed by great and celebrated names, and implicitly to yield to high authority; and all are by nature inclined to their ſide of the queſtion. Chriſtianity is a ſyſtem of reſtraint on every paſſion, and every appetite. Some it forbids entirely; and all it confines within limits, which by the maſs of mankind, both learned and unlearned, will be eſteemed narrow and ſevere. Philoſophy, on the contrary, holds out, as you have already ſeen, a general licenſe to every paſſion and appetite. Its doctrines therefore pleaſe of courſe; and find a ready welcome in the heart.

Mankind being thus prepared, it cannot be thought ſtrange, that Infidel Philoſophy, although deſtitute of a baſis in truth, and of ſupport from evidence, ſhould preſent danger, even from arguments. Its great object is to unſettle every thing moral and obligatory, and to ſettle nothing. Objection is, therefore, its chief employment, and its only employment, in which danger can be found. Had it been engaged merely in deviſing moral ſyſtems of its own, it would have provoked no other anſwer from Common ſenſe, than a ſtare, or a ſmile.

An objector will always find ſome advantages from the character, which he aſſumes. He finds advantages with reſpect to labour. A ſentence will often expreſs an objection, which muſt be anſwered by a volume. He will find advantages in the nature of his diſputation. The plaineſt and moſt undoubted truths may be forcibly aſſailed by objections, and by ſuch as are obvious to a very limited underſtanding.

The objections againſt the Scriptures, which will be formidable, are chiefly derived from two ſources:

1. The doctrines of the Scriptures are, and in the nature

nature of the caſe muſt be, in ſeveral inſtances, myſterious. The doctrines of the Scriptures are chiefly employed about the nature of Man, and the exiſtence, character, deſigns, and will, of God. The firſt of theſe ſubjects, notwithſtanding the laborious and ardent inveſtigation of three thouſand years, is ſtill far from being ſatisfactorily explained. The daily inquiries and voluminous treatiſes of theſe very Philoſophers, and the new views, which they continually attempt to exhibit, of this ſubject, prove the aſſertion to be true, in their opinion at leaſt; and, were there a doubt remaining, a child could eaſily remove it; for a child can aſk queſtions concerning human nature, which no Philoſopher can anſwer. The laſt of theſe ſubjects, the exiſtence, character, deſigns, and will, of God, is more myſterious than any other. Of both theſe ſubjects Revelation is a profeſſed account; and as the ſubjects are in their nature myſterious, ſo the Revelation muſt, to conſiſt with truth, be, in many reſpects, myſterious alſo. In ſuch ſubjects difficulties may be eaſily and always found. As it is impoſſible, that we ſhould thoroughly underſtand them, the parts, which we do not underſtand, will furniſh difficulties reſpecting thoſe which we do. Of the nature of exiſtence, ſubſtances, cauſality, and the mode of operation, we know little or nothing, even where creatures are the ſubjects of inveſtigation. Of the Creator it may well be ſuppoſed, and muſt be acknowledged, that we know leſs than of creatures. Many particulars of theſe great ſubjects of the Scriptures muſt be unknown. Wherever we are ignorant, we cannot comprehend; and wherever we cannot comprehend, we can find many difficulties, much perplexity, and much doubt. A man of moderate talents will eaſily perceive, and forcibly repreſent, ſuch difficulties; but no man can, in many caſes, remove them. They can be removed only by the attainment of perfect knowledge of the ſubjects, and ſuch knowledge can never be attained by man.

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The difficulties, objected to the Scriptures on this ſcore, all ariſe from what we know not, and not from what we know. Infidels do not ſhew, that that, which is diſcloſed, is contrary to any thing, which we know, but merely that all is not diſcloſed, which we might wiſh to be diſcloſed, and which is neceſſary to a thorough comprehenſion of the ſubject. They do not ſhew, that what is diſcloſed, and believed, is untrue, or improbable; but that it is myſterious and incomprehenſible; in other words, that it contains things, which lie beyond the human capacity. This, inſtead of being a ſolid objection againſt the Revelation of the Scriptures, is a mere expoſition of human ignorance. In this part of their concluſions there is no controverſy between them and us.

The myſterioufneſs of the Scriptures, in ſeveral particulars, has been often directly as well as inſidiouſly, objected againſt their divine origin. To me it appears to be a plain and powerful argument in favour of that origin. Were there nothing in Creation or Providence, which man could not comprehend, one important proof that they were works of God would be taken away. Were there nothing in Revelation, which man could not perfectly underſtand, a ſimilar proof of its reality would be deſtroyed. What man can thus underſtand, man might, for ought that appears, have alſo deviſed.

Objections of this nature muſt, to poſſeſs any real force, ariſe from ſomething which we know, and not from that of which we are ignorant. The things objected to ought to be inconſiſtent with ſomething ſeen and underſtood; otherwiſe whatever perplexity they may occaſion in thoſe, who dwell upon them, they can never produce rational conviction.

2. Another claſs of objects, againſt which ſimilar objections have been made, is compoſed of facts, manners, and other local circumſtances. The Scriptures, being written in a diſtant age, and country,

record facts, which muſt in a conſiderable meaſure be connected with facts and circumſtances, neceſſarily unknown by us; and appeal to manners, cuſtoms, and other local circumſtances, which muſt be equally unknown. The ſame difficulties may, therefore, be raiſed in this, as in the former caſe, and with the ſame ſucceſs. In both caſes our ignorance, and not the falſehood of the things declared, is the cauſe of the difficulties ſpecified. By this I intend that a perſon perfectly acquainted with the things, ſtated in the Scriptures, and with all their appendages, would not only clearly diſcern the truth and propriety of the ſtatement, but be able to explain its truth and propriety to our full ſatisfaction; while at the ſame time, the ſame perſon, being ſuppoſed to be as ignorant as ourſelves, would find all the difficulties in the ſtatement, which are found by us. Still the ſtatement is the ſame, and neither more nor leſs true, but is more or leſs explicable, as the perſon propoſed is more or leſs informed.

Hence it is clear, that, although Chriſtians ſhould not be able to ſhew *how* many facts, recorded in the Scriptures, took place, by what facts they were preceded or followed, what were their cauſes, attendants, or conſequences, this furniſhes no ſolid objection to the Scriptures as a Revelation. Every objection of this nature muſt, to be ſolid, contradict ſome known fact, and be attended with difficulties of ſome other nature than mere inexplicableneſs. If this be admitted as a proof of falſehood in writings, no ancient hiſtory can be believed.

A happy illuſtration of theſe ſentiments and a ſtrong proof of what may even now be done to throw light on this claſs of objects in the Scriptures, may be found in the firſt Volume of Lardner's Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory. In this able and ſucceſsful Work, a ſyſtem of facts impoſſible to be completely underſtood, unleſs developed in ſome ſuch method, is unanſwerably proved to be true.

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The very ſame difficulties are found, and to a greater degree, in the Works, than in the Word, of God. Under the impreſſions, made by the former, the ſame men become atheiſts, who, under thoſe made by the latter, became deiſts. Thoſe, on the contrary, who require proofs, and inconſiſtencies with ſomething known, to ſubvert or deſtroy, their belief, will admit the world to be the work, and the Scriptures to be the word, of God. So true is the declaration of the Committee of Public Inſtruction to the National Convention of France, that a Nation of Theiſts muſt of courſe become Revelationiſts.

This method of objecting to the Scriptures will make little impreſſion on men diſpoſed impartially and thoroughly to examine, and poſſeſſed of the proper means of examination. Still there is danger from it to you. Think not this a cenſure, or a proof of diſeſteem. You are young; you will find difficulties; you may be perplexed; you may doubt. Every difficulty you will not be able to remove. Such as you would be able to remove you will not always find the neceſſary time and means of removing. Inclination, induſtry, proper books, and able friends, may not be eaſily found. Study, therefore, and in ſeaſon, ſo far as you can, the evidences, by which Revelation is ſupported, and ſuffer nothing to deſtroy their force, or to unſettle your faith, unleſs it clearly oppoſes ſomething, which is really known.

II. Another ſource of danger to you is the Confidence, with which moſt Philoſophers aſſert their doctrines, and advance their arguments.

It is an unjuſt, yet it is a common concluſion of the mind, that confidence in aſſerting is as an argument of knowledge in the aſſertor. You have, doubtleſs, often heard obſervations like this. "He muſt know; or he would not aſſert ſo ſtrongly and confidently." From the advantages of education, which you have enjoyed, I preſume you have, however, adopted an opinion directly contrary to

that above ſpecified; and are all ready to ſay, that bold aſſertions, and confident airs of knowledge and wiſdom, are of courſe ſuſpicious; and that, inſtead of being influenced by them to believe the more readily, you ſhould only be induced to doubt. Still let me inform you, there is danger to you from this ſource. Peremptory declarations, bold aſſurance, and that appearance of knowledge, which defies oppoſition, have ever had no ſmall influence in gaining credit to the doctrines which they were intended to ſupport. Though it is uſual for aſſertions to be roundly made, becauſe they are faintly believed by the aſſertor, as lies are commonly backed by oaths and curſes: yet young perſons, unacquainted with the world, and with the arts and addreſs which are uſed in it, not having been taught theſe things, or taught them only by books, will generally imagine, that what is ſo plumply ſaid muſt be true, or at leaſt highly probable. This will happen eſpecially when the aſſertor is a man of talents and reputation. In ſuch a man, vanity is not expected to rule, prejudice to decide, nor arrogance to dictate. On the contrary, he is preſuppoſed to examine with care, to aſſent only to evidence, and to aſſert from rational conviction. It would be happy, were this preconceived opinion verified by experience; but moſt unhappily no opinion is more fallacious. All the prejudices which are found in ordinary men are often found in thoſe of ſuperior minds, and not unfrequently in higher degrees. To theſe they ſuperadd, in many inſtances, that pride of talents, which operates to a groundleſs, deceitful, and let me add contemptible, confidence in their own deciſions, and a magiſterial and oracular method of communicating them to mankind. Suſpect theſe appearances therefore wherever you find them; and remember, that confidence of aſſertion, and airs of triumph, infer not any certainty in the opinion declared.

III. Another ſource of the danger ſpecified is found

found in the various methods uſed by Philoſophers to perſuade their readers, that their opinions are embraced by the great body of mankind, eſpecially of the ingenious and learned.

It is a remarkable fact in the Hiſtory of man, that vice has always claimed a ſuperiority over virtue, irreligion and unbelief over faith. In common life, no ſooner does a man enter boldly upon the practice of vice and licentiouſneſs, than he arrogates to himſelf a character ſuperior to that of his ſober companions, and to his own former character. A looſe man rarely ſpeaks concerning one of more worth, without evident proofs of conſcious ſuperiority. Virtue itſelf, if you will take the pains to examine, will be found to be, in his view, the weak and inferior part of his neighbour's character, and vice the great and ſuperior ingredient in his own. According to this method of eſtimation, Satan, as deſcribed in the Scriptures, is the moſt reſpectable being in the univerſe.

The ſuperiority claimed by Infidels over Believers is not leſs unfounded; even if we admit what few Chriſtians would probably admit, viz. that its foundation is not exactly the ſame. Chriſtians believe, that the Scriptures are, and Infidels that they are not, a divine Revelation. Neither they, nor we, know; both claſſes merely believe; for the caſe admits not of knowledge, nor can it be determined with certainty. The only queſtion to be decided between the contending parties, is, which believes on the beſt evidence. Infidels are believers equally with Chriſtians, and merely believe the contrary poſition. That faith therefore which is beſt ſupported, is the moſt rational, and ought to confer the ſuperiority of character.

At the preſent time, a new engine is abundantly employed to eſtabliſh this diſtinction in favor of Infidels. It is boldly aſſerted, that the world has hitherto lain in a ſtate of ignorance and infancy; that it has been

been chained by authority, and influenced by ſuperſtition, but that it has, at the preſent time, broken at once its bonds, rouſed itſelf into manly exertion, and ſeized intuitively upon the whole ſyſtem of truth, moral, political, and natural. Of this mighty and propitious change in the affairs of man, Infidel Philoſophers claim to be the ſole authors. Hence the character of ingenious and learned, is challenged as being in a ſenſe their excluſive property.

I cheerfully admit, Young Gentlemen, that many Infidels have been ingenious men; that ſome of them have been learned men; and that a few of them have been great men. Hume, Tindal, and a few others, have been diſtinguiſhed for ſuperior ſtrength of mind, Bolingbroke for eloquence of the pen, Voltaire for brilliancy of imagination, and various others for reſpectable talents of different kinds. But I am wholly unable to form a liſt of Infidels, which can, without extreme diſadvantage, be compared with the two Bacons, Eraſmus, Cumberland, Stillingfleet, Grotius, Locke, Butler, Newton, Boyle, Berkeley, Milton, Johnſon, &c. In no walk of genius, in no path of knowledge, can Infidels ſupport a claim to ſuperiority, or equality with Chriſtians.

Nor am I leſs ready to acknowledge, that ingenious men have lately made, and are ſtill making, many improvements in ſcience and in arts. Unhappy would it indeed be, if, after all the advances of preceding ages, the preſent ſhould be unable to advance at all; if no additional truth ſhould be diſcovered, and no erroneous opinion detected. But what, let me aſk, would have been our ſituation, had theſe and many other able men, of paſt ages, never lived? How much of all, which we know, is contained in their works, and derived ſolely from their talents and labours? Can it be juſt, can it be decent, to forget the hand that feeds us, and to treat with contempt thoſe, without whoſe aſſiſtance we ſhould have been ſavages and blockheads?

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That the world has materially changed, and is ſtill changing, in many important particulars, cannot be queſtioned; but whether theſe particulars are either profitable, or honourable, may well be queſtioned. That the knowledge, or the happineſs, of mankind has been increaſed by the change is yet to be proved. We have not yet put off the harneſs, and our time for rational *boaſting* is, therefore, not arrived. When ſome of the favourite dogmas of modern times have been better ſupported by arguments, and received a more auſpicious ſanction from experience, there will be evidence in their favour, which hitherto has not appeared.

You will eaſily ſee, from what has been ſaid, that, when Infidel Philoſophy is aſſerted to be embraced by the great body of the learned and ingenious, nothing more is intended, than to aſſert the ſuperior character of Infidels to Chriſtians; not a ſuperiority ariſing from native talents, or from attainments, but from Infidelity. It is not intended, that learned and ingenious Chriſtians have been convinced and become Infidels, but that Chriſtians are of courſe deſtitute of learning and ingenuity; and Infidels of courſe poſſeſſed of both. The real weight of this argument I leave to your deciſion.

Allowing, however, the whole of what is thus aſſerted, no argument will be furniſhed by it againſt Chriſtianity. The moſt extenſive prevalence of a ſyſtem is no proof of its truth. Heatheniſm formerly overſpread the world, and numbered, as its votaries, nearly all the learned and unlearned of the human race. Was it therefore, a ſyſtem of truth? The Ariſtotelian Philoſophy prevailed among all the learned men in Europe, for two thouſand years. Would you, therefore, embrace it? When Galileo received the Copernican ſyſtem, almoſt all the learned and unlearned diſbelieved it. Was it therefore falſe?

When Chriſtianity firſt began its progreſs, it could

could boaſt of only twelve poor, uneducated men as its champions, with perhaps leſs than one thouſand followers. By the labours of this little band it overturned, in leſs than three centuries, moſt of the ſuperſtition, power, policy, learning, and philoſophy, of the known world. By the labours of Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle, and Calvin, it roſe again from extreme depreſſion, in the face, and againſt the ſtrength, of the moſt formidable power, which the world has ever ſeen. Should it again return to the ſame depreſſion, it will again riſe on the ruins of all its enemies. Every promiſe, made to Chriſtians, has been hitherto exactly fulfilled. Thoſe, which reſpect periods yet to come, will receive the ſame faithful completion.

Yet ſuch is the character of man, and eſpecially in his youth, that you will feel the influence of this triumphant aſſertion. You will feel, at times, in danger of being left alone, and at leaſt of being deſerted and oppoſed by genius and knowledge; and will naturally ſhrink from a combat, in which ſkill, ſtrength, and numbers are imagined to be enrolled on the ſide of the enemy. I have only to obſerve further, that your choice of Chriſtianity will not be leſs wiſe, becauſe numbers oppoſe it, nor your ſalvation leſs complete, becauſe it is not obtained by Infidels.*

IV. Another ſource of this danger is the contempt and Ridicule with which Chriſtianity is oppoſed.

Contempt is the ſpirit, and ridicule the weapon, with which Chriſtianity has long been principally oppoſed. In this Lord Shaftſbury led the way; or, perhaps more properly, he gave a peculiar countenance and ſupport to this method of attacking Chriſtianity, by advancing the remarkable opinion, that Ridicule

* To young men inclining to Infidelity I beg leave to recommend a careful, and ſerious conſideration of two paſſages of Scripture; one, Heb. vi. 4—8. the other, Heb. x. 26—31.

Ridicule is the teſt of Truth. In purſuing this doctrine he himſelf is unwarily led to declare, that this very Ridicule muſt be brought to the teſt of Reaſon, or Argument. The whole train of Infidel Philoſophers, whatever may have been their opinion, have harmonized with him in the practice. Voltaire, who regarded all means alike, provided they would aid the accompliſhment of his own ends, writes thus to his friend D'Alembert. " Render thoſe pedants (i. e. divines) as enormouſly ridiculous as you can. Ridicule will do every thing. It is the ſtrongeſt of all weapons. A bon mot is as good a thing as a good book.

I dont deny, that ridicule may be properly uſed in certain caſes; but I wholly deny the propriety of uſing it to decide any ſerious concern of mankind. A proud and vain man will always affect and expreſs contempt for all, who differ from him, and eſpecially for thoſe who oppoſe him; and for all the arguments adduced againſt his opinions, eſpecially for thoſe which he is unable to confront with arguments of ſuperior force. But pride and vanity are fooliſh paſſions, and uniformly leſſen the ability of a man either to diſcover, or to receive, moral truth. Prejudice is proverbially acknowledged to be a potent hindrance to the diſcovery, and the reception, of truth; and pride begets the ſtrongeſt of all prejudicies. In itſelf it is groſs, misjudging, miſtake, and folly; and in its effects it involves a hoſt of follies and miſtakes. Hence the Wiſeſt of all men, from profound acquaintance with the nature of man, has declared, that " the Rod of pride is in the mouth of the fooliſh."

The cauſe, which needs theſe weapons, cannot be juſt; the doctrine, which cannot be ſupported without them, muſt be falſe. All men, when preſſed with argument, and trembling through fear of being convicted of error, reſort, of courſe, to ſuch means of defence, or of attack, as are in their power.

When reaſons fail, ridicule is ſtill left; and he who cannot diſprove, can ſtill inquire with arrogance and diſdain, "What will this Babbler ſay." Over the cool and modeſt opponent he will feel a ſuperiority of ſpirit, if not of argument; and will quit the field with the ſtride of triumph, and the conſciouſneſs of that victory for which he contended. His capital object is attained. He has not, it is true, repelled his adverſary; but he has claimed a triumph over him; he has not defended his own ground; but he has not been forced to acknowledge himſelf defeated.

Unworthy and unſatisfying as this method of attacking Chriſtianity appears, and in ſpite of the ſtrong preſumptions againſt a cauſe, which has ever needed and reſorted to it, you will find no ſmall danger from theſe very weapons. You will dread to become the objects of ſcorn, and to be wounded by the ſhafts of deriſion. You will be afraid to declare yourſelves friends to a cauſe, which has been the ſtanding jeſt of ſo many men of wit, and which has been ſo often and ſo publickly holden up to ſyſtematized contempt; to which inſult is merit, and mockery a faſhion.

Young, novices in human affairs, doubtful of your own ſtrength, partially acquainted with this great controverſy, ardently coveting eſteem, and trembling at the approach of diſreputation, you will need no common ſhare of fortitude, no frequent degree of ſelf-command, to ſtand the ſhock, to examine the true character of the contending parties, and to diſcern the real nature of the conflicting cauſes. Could you aſſume this fortitude, and accompliſh this examination, the danger would vaniſh; but you will be aſſailed ſo often, and ſo powerfully, that, perplexed before by the arguments which I have mentioned, you will be in imminent danger of yielding yourſelves a prey, to avoid the fatigues of an arduous and unremitted conteſt, and to ſhun the aſſaults of an enemy, who not only points his arrows with ſteel, but dips them in poiſon.

V. Another ſource of this danger is the actual Bias of the world towards Infidelity.

The natural propenſity of man, as exhibited by the Scriptures, and as proved by all experience, is a propenſity to ſin. The conviction of this truth has ſpread through mankind, in every age, and in every country. Their religions have all been ſteadily employed to expiate it, their laws and education to reſtrain it, their converſations and their hiſtories to recount its effects. Sin and Infidelity are mutually cauſes and effects. Sin demands and prompts to Infidelity, as its juſtification; Infidelity warrants, encourages, and defends ſin. Sin derives its peace and ſecurity from Infidelity; Infidelity its reception, ſupport, and friends, from ſin. Thus, in every age, there is a natural bias in man to Infidelity.

This bias poſſeſſes, at different periods, different degrees of ſtrength. Numbers, men in power, men of popular characters, men of great talents, contribute, by turns, to the general currency of vice, or virtue, or truth, or falſehood. From theſe and various other cauſes, it becomes faſhionable, at times, to be grave, decent, moral, and even religious; and, at times, to be diſſolute, licentious, and groſs.

The faſhionable bias of the preſent time will be readily acknowledged to be unfavourable to Chriſtianity. Beſide the influence of a long progreſs in vice, ſince the Reformation, and the revival of Religion conſequent upon it, a progreſs loudly proclaimed by Infidels, as well as by Chriſtians; beſide the influence of all the inceſſant attacks, made upon Religion and Virtue by Philoſophers; the preſent ſingular convulſion of Europe has had a moſt malignant efficacy on this ſubject. At no period has the human mind diſcovered ſuch impatience of moral reſtraint, broken with ſo bold a hand the bonds of duty, or defied in ſuch haughty terms morals, religion, and the government of God. Were the preſent a proper occaſion, it would be eaſy to ſhew the

connection between ſuch a convulſion and the general demoralization of the human race, the depreſſion of virtue, and the ſubverſion of human happineſs. Suffice it to ſay, here, that, did not the evil furniſh a cure, from its own bowels, did it not prove, by what it has already effected, that, within a little period of its progreſs, it will, if unreſtrained, convert man into a ſavage, and the world into a deſert, its final miſchief to the cauſe of Chriſtianity could not be calculated. Circumſtanced as it is, it has filled every Chriſtian, every friend of the human race, every ſober man, with ſerious alarms, not for the permanence of Chriſtianity, but for the continuance of peace, the ſafety of every right, and the exiſtence of every valuable intereſt.

In your own country the effects of this convulſion, and the ſtrength of this bias, are leſs perceived. Here the friends of Revelation greatly outnumber its enemies. But even here the evil in a degree exiſts. Nor will its influence probably be ſmall. The report will, in ſome meaſure, affect you from abroad. At home, you will ſee one decent or doubtful perſon, and another, ſliding ſlowly down the declivity of irreligion, and many, more heedleſs, or more daring, leaping at once into the gulph beneath. Here, a companion will turn his back, and walk no more with Chriſt. There, a Parent, or Inſtructor, will forſake him, having loved the preſent world. Among theſe will frequently be found the gay, the pleaſing, and the accompliſhed; and in ſome inſtances, the grave, the learned, and the honourable. On one ſide, the temptation will charm; on the other it will ſanction. Allured, awed, ſupported, perhaps without a friend at hand to pluck you by the arm, or to point to you either the danger or the means of eſcaping it, it can ſcarcely be hoped, that none of you will be deſtroyed. Moſt of the Infidels, whom I have known, have fallen a ſacrifice to this cauſe, or to the fear of ridicule.

VI. A greater ſource of this danger, than any which has been mentioned, is a natural Bias in your own hearts againſt Chriſtianity.

You, like the reſt of men, are naturally attached to the pleaſures of ſin, to the unlawful gratifications of paſſion and appetite. Whatever indulges this attachment will be regarded by you with complacency; whatever reſtrains it, however neceſſarily, or uſefully, will be viewed with pain. The moſt powerful, the moſt univerſal, the moſt conſtantly felt, the moſt difficult to be eſcaped, of all ſuch reſtraints, is the ſyſtem of doctrines, contained in the Scriptures. Civil Government, in a different manner, is employed in promoting the ſame end, and, at times, operates with a ſuperior efficacy. But its influence is felt only within certain limits, and on particular occaſions; whereas the Scriptures extend their influence to every place, time, and action, ſeek out the offender in ſolitude, as well as in crowds, ſound the alarm at midnight, as well as in the open day, enter into the receſſes of the boſom, watch the riſing ſin, and threaten the guilty purpoſe, while it is yet a ſhapeleſs embryo. Hence, more than Civil Government itſelf, it has been maligned, and combated, by licentious men.

The reſtraints of Chriſtianity you, like others, will, at times, feel with impatience and pain. From this impatience will naturally ſpring wiſhes to free yourſelves from companions ſo intruſive and troubleſome; and ſuch wiſhes will naturally terminate in attempts to accompliſh this freedom. Of all means to this end the moſt obvious, the moſt eaſy, the moſt effectual, is diſbelief. To diſbelieve, therefore, you will be ſtrongly inclined; and much care, reſolution, and fidelity to yourſelves, will be neceſſary to reſiſt the influence, and avert the danger, of this inclination.

In this and in every caſe, in which man is placed, aſſiſtance may be given, the mind may be ſtrengthened,

ened, and ſafety may be obtained, by the proper uſe of ſuch means, as are furniſhed by the Providence of God. From me, with more propriety than from moſt others, you may juſtly expect ſuch aſſiſtance. To you I ſtand in a near, important, and parental relation. I have gone before you through the ſame courſe, have felt the ſame danger, and have been ſtrongly tempted by means of them to yield myſelf a prey to this unhappy Philoſophy. I cannot, therefore, be indifferent to the dangers of others, eſpecially to you, my pupils, my children. Nor can I be more properly employed, in this the laſt opportunity allowed me of rendering to you my official duty, than in endeavouring in ſo intereſting a caſe to communicate to you the means of ſtrength and ſafety. This, you will remember, was the

Third thing, propoſed in this diſcourſe, viz. to attempt to diſſuade you from yielding yourſelves a prey to this Philoſophy.

Many diſſuaſives from this conduct are, I truſt, already ſuggeſted to you in the account, already given of this Philoſophy. A reception of ſuch doctrines, and an union with ſuch men, cannot be ſuppoſed as rational, or expedient. No one of you would, in a cool moment of deliberation, conſent either to ſuch belief, or to ſuch conduct. It will be yours to decide, that your judgment ſhall not bow to inclination and prejudice.

In addition to the diſſuaſives already ſuggeſted let me urge, in the

I. Place, as a ſtrong reaſon to prevent you from embracing Infidel Philoſophy, its continually changing character.

Truth is, at all times, and with reſpect to all things, of an unchangeable nature. Every change of doctrines furniſhes intuitive certainty, that either the doctrine which is renounced, or the doctrine which is aſſumed, is falſe. This changeable character is eminently the character of this Philoſophy. Among

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the ancients it was a mere wind of doctrine, varying through all the points of the compass. Among the moderns also, it has, cameleon-like, appeared of many colours. Lord Herbert published it under the form of Natural Religion. This he insisted on, in strong and solemn terms, as a sum of duties indispensible; and declared, that men were wholly accountable for the discharge of them, and that according to their fulfilment or neglect of them, they would be judged and rewarded. Yet even *he* sapped the foundation of his whole system, by undermining moral obligation, and removing guilt from sin. Him several succeeding writers appeared, in a degree, and at times, disposed to follow; but even they, with most others, fell speedily into mere Infidelity: i. e. They believed neither natural nor Revealed Religion. Of course, they left themselves without law, obligation, or duty. The system now became a system of mere objection. According to it, Christianity was false, and nothing else was true: i. e. they substituted nothing, as a rule of duty, in its place. In the mean time, they in a degree, and their followers in a greater degree, by insinuation, assertion, and argument, justified the indulgencies of passion and appetite, and exhibited them as the true, the chief, and even the only good, of man. From this, which may be called the Animal system of Morals, the next gradation was the doctrine of the Pyrrhonists and New Academics, usually termed Scepticism. This was the favourite doctrine of Mr. Hume, and is exhibited by him as the summit of human attainments. Nor did the contradiction, which attends the very reception of this doctrine, at all startle his sagacious mind, shocked as it was by the bare idea of a miracle. From this step but one advancement remained, viz. downright Atheism. This is now the most general and the most approved Infidel Philosophy. "Deism," says a modern Infidel writer, "is but the first step of Reason out of Superstition (i. e. out of Revealed,

vealed Religion.) No perſon remains a Deiſt, but through want of reflection, timidity, paſſion, or obſtinacy. Time, experience, and an impartial examination of our ideas, will undeceive us," (i. e. make us Atheiſts.) "The Supreme Being," ſays Anacharſis Cloots (the Reporter of the Committee of Public Inſtruction to the French National Convention) in an official Report of that Committee, "the Eternal Being, is no other than Nature uncreated and uncreatable; and the only Providence is the Aſſociation of mankind in freedom and equality. Man, when free, wants no other Divinity than himſelf. Reaſon dethrones both the Kings of the earth, and the Kings of heaven. No Monarchy above, if we wiſh to preſerve our republic below. Volumes have been written to determine whether a republic of Atheiſts could exiſt. I maintain, that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the exiſtence of a heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horſe within your walls! What you adore by day will be your deſtruction at night. A people of Theiſts will neceſſarily become Revelationiſts." Thus the great body of Lord Herbert's followers eſpouſe and maintain doctrines, which he declared to be incapable of being received by any man, who deſerved the name of a rational being.

But all theſe things cannot be true. If Natural Religion be truth, then Scepticiſm cannot be truth; the Animal ſyſtem cannot be truth; mere Infidelity cannot be truth; Atheiſm cannot be truth. The very face of this Philoſophy is, therefore, ſuſpicious. The features are not parts of the ſame countenance, and, when ſeen together, preſent even to the glancing eye, inſtead of beauty and lovelineſs, an incongruous and forbidding deformity.

The variance of this Philoſophy is by no means confined to the account, already given. Each of theſe forms furniſhes many diverſities and changes. Atheiſm itſelf is exhibited under many appearances.

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As a total denial of God, it is now the atomic, or Epicurean ſyſtem of things brought together by an eternal conatus, or endeavour, towards exertion, caſually acting at a particular unknown period. It is the eternal exiſtence of the world in its preſent form, and an eternal ſucceſſion of human generations. It is a ſyſtem of chemical and mechanical operations of matter on ſuch an eternal world, which by a happy and myſterious energy, at ſome lucky moment, gave birth to thought and volition, which, by a concurrence of circumſtances equally lucky, have ſince continued themſelves. It is the volcanic ſyſtem, by which ſuns were emitted from a diſtant unknown maſs, the matrix of the Univerſe; worlds from ſuns, and continents and their furniture from worlds. As partial Atheiſm, it is Scepticiſm. It is an admiſſion of the being of God, and a denial of his Attributes. It is an admiſſion of his being, and a denial of his Providence. It is a denial of a future ſtate to Man. It is an acknowledgment of the world, or of fire, or of all the elements, or of an unknown Anima mundi, or ſoul of the Univerſe, as God. In a word, it is any thing, and every thing, rather than an acknowledgment of the One, Infinite, and All-perfect JEHOVAH.

In all theſe, and in all other, ſyſtems of Infidel Philoſophy, the difficulties and embarraſſments to faith are leſſened neither in number, nor in degree. On the contrary, they are multiplied, and enhanced, beyond calculation. The uſual courſe of the controverſy has been this. Infidels have uniformly attacked, and Chriſtians merely defended; Infidels have found difficulties, and Chriſtians have employed themſelves merely, or chiefly, in removing them. Hence Infidels have naturally felt, and written, as if the difficulties lay ſolely on the Chriſtian ſide of the debate. Had Chriſtians, with more worldly wiſdom, carried their arms into the fortreſſes of their antagoniſts, they would long ſince, and very eaſily, have

proved them to be every where weak and untenable, the ſhelter only, and pens, of occaſional marauders.

In embracing ſuch a Philoſophy what ſatisfaction can be found, what reſting place for the mind? To Philoſophers it has plainly furniſhed none; for they have retreated, and wandered, from one reſidence to another; and have thus proved, that they have diſcovered no place, where they could permanently and comfortably abide. *You* will feel even more unſettled. You feel that you are rational and immortal, that your intereſts are therefore immenſe and ineſtimable, and that an effectual proviſion for them demands, and will repay, every care, and every exertion. To a mind, thus circumſtanced, uncertainty is corroding and intolerable; and from a ſyſtem thus fluctuating nothing but uncertainty can be gained, or hoped. Wretched muſt be the condition of that mind, which, labouring with intenſe anxiety to diſcover a peaceful reſt for an unſatisfied conſcience, and a final home at the cloſe of a weary pilgrimage, finds within the horizon of its view nothing but a ſtructure built of clouds, variable in its form, and ſhadowy in its ſubſtance, gay indeed with a thouſand brilliant colours, and romantic with all the fantaſtical diverſities of ſhape, but bleak, deſolate, and incapable of being inhabited.

II. This Philoſophy preſents no efficacious means of reſtraining Vice, or promoting Virtue; but on the contrary encourages Vice and diſcourages Virtue.

I have already conſidered this ſubject at ſome length, as the Philoſophers themſelves and their diſciples were concerned. As every perſon may not tranſfer the argument from them to himſelf, or to others, it may be uſeful to ſee this application made, and with a degree of particularity.

All Virtue is ſummed up in Piety to God, Juſtice, truth, and kindneſs to our fellow-men, and the government of our own paſſions and appetites, commonly called ſelf-government, or ſelf-denial. All

Vice

Vice is compriſed in the diſpoſitions and conduct, oppoſite to theſe. The only poſſible encouragements to Virtue are either the pleaſure which Virtue gives, or the rewards which it promiſes. The only reſtraints upon Vice are the pain which it produces, or the puniſhment with which it is threatened.

That Piety is not encouraged by this Philoſophy will ſcarcely need to be proved. A great proportion of Infidel Philoſophers deny the exiſtence of God, and thus expunge not only the obligation, but the poſſibility, of being pious.

Mr. Hobbes ſays that all Religion is ridiculous.

Mr. Blount objects to prayer as a duty.

Lord Shaftſbury aſſerts that Salvation is a ridiculous thing.

Doctor Tindal, that every Man muſt form rules of duty for himſelf, and that theſe muſt vary as circumſtances vary.

Mr. Chubb, that all Religions are alike, and that it is of no conſequence what Religion a man embraces; and he allows not the leaſt room to believe,

That dependence on God's Providence, truſt in him, and reſignation to him, are any parts of duty, or Religion.

Mr. Hobbes aſſerts, that that, which is not matter, is nothing.

Mr. Blount inſinuates, that there are two independent and eternal Beings; one good, the other evil.

Mr. Hume, that there is no reaſon to believe that the Univerſe proceeded from a Cauſe;

That it is unreaſonable to believe God infinitely wiſe and good;

That what we believe to be a perfection in God may be a defect.

Lord Bolingbroke, that God is poſſeſſed of no moral attribute diſcoverable by us;

That God did not determine the exiſtence of particular men; and

That God concerns not himſelf with the affairs of men; or, if he does, he only regards collective bodies of men, and not individuals.

Here we ſee it directly taught, that if there be a God, matter is the only God; that there is no evidence, that the Univerſe proceeded from a Cauſe; and that it is unreaſonable to believe it; that God has no diſcoverable moral perfection; that what we call moral perfections, ſuch as holineſs, truth, juſtice, and goodneſs, may be mere defects; that God concerns not himſelf with the affairs or conduct of individual men, and of courſe not with the affairs of communities; that he does not even determine their exiſtence; and of courſe as we came into exiſtence without him, we have nothing to do with him. We are alſo taught, that Salvation is ridiculous, that prayer is a fault, or ſin, that dependance, truſt, and reſignation, are no parts of Religion, and that all Religions are alike. Of courſe we are taught, that there is rationally no ſuch thing as piety; no ſuch thing as a God, the object of piety; or if there is, that there is no evidence to prove his exiſtence; and, if this be given up, that he is not a moral being; neither juſt, ſincere, good, or holy; of courſe, that he is deſtitute of all amiableneſs, all deſert of love, or veneration. To cloſe the ſcheme, we are informed that all religions are alike, equally eſtimable, equally rational, equally uſeful: that the Religion of Carthage, and of all other Heathen countries, which demanded and ſanctioned the butchery of human hecatombs; the Religion of Egypt, which proſtrated millions of reaſonable beings before a calf, a cat, a crocodile, a duck, a frog, a rat, a leek, or an onion; the Religion of Babylon, of Paphos, and of Hindoſtan, which proſtituted annually, as an act of ſolemn public worſhip, virgins and matrons innumerable to the caſual luſt of every traveller, or to the ſtated brutiſm of a herd of leachers, ſelected for the pollution; that the worſhip of an adulterer, a ſtrumpet, a butcher,

or

or a thief, is the ſame with the pure and ſpiritual worſhip of the Infinite and eternal Jehovah, the only Great, the only Wiſe, the only Good, and with the Religion, which prompts to love him with all the heart and ſoul, and ſtrength, and underſtanding, and to love our neighbour as ourſelves.

The manner in which Infidel Philoſophy has regarded truth, juſtice, and kindneſs to our fellow men, will be eaſily ſhewn from their own declarations alſo.

Mr. Hobbes aſſerts, that a Ruler is not bound by any obligation of truth, or juſtice, to his ſubjects, and that he can do no wrong:

That a man, believing Chriſt in his heart, may lawfully deny him before the magiſtrate:

That every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them by force if he can.

Lord Shaftſbury, that the hope of rewards, and the fear of puniſhments is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it (Of courſe, ſo far as civil government operates on man, it is noxious to virtue, and takes away all motives to it. Yet Mr. Hobbes makes obedience to Government, through fear, the only virtue, or right conduct).

Mr. Hume ſupports the lawfulneſs of ſuicide on this, as one principal ground, that it cannot be oppoſed to the will of God, becauſe it takes place. Of courſe, whatever takes place is conformable to the will of God. Falſehood, therefore, injuſtice, murder, revenge, tyranny, fraud, and every other crime, are conformable to the will of God, for they all take place.

Lord Bolingbroke teaches, that Ambition, the Luſt of Power, Avarice, and Senſuality, may all be lawfully gratified, if they can be ſafely gratified.

Voltaire requeſts D'Alembert to tell in his behalf a direct falſehood.

D'Alembert informs Voltaire, that he has told this falſehood.

In theſe opinions, truth, juſtice, and kindneſs, to our

our fellow men, are plainly deſtroyed, the obligation to them wholly removed, and every violation of them juſtified. If a man may utter falſehood, where Religion, or a friend, is concerned, he may lawfully utter it on every occaſion, and to every perſon. If all have a right to all things, none can do any wrong. If that which takes place, is right becauſe it takes place, wrong cannot take place. If ambition, the luſt of power, avarice, and ſenſuality, may be lawfully gratified, when they can be ſafely gratified, all crimes againſt our fellow men may be lawfully perpetrated, becauſe all, which are called crimes of this nature, are merely gratifications of one or other of theſe paſſions.

Let us now examine the manner, in which theſe Philoſophers have conſidered ſelf-government.

Lord Herbert declares, that men are not haſtily, or on ſmall grounds, to be condemned, who ſin by bodily conſtitution; and

That the indulgence of luſt and anger is no more to be blamed, than the thirſt occaſioned by the dropſy, or the ſleepineſs produced by the Lethargy.

Mr. Hobbes, that a man may lawfully get all things if he can.

Doctor Tindal, that every man muſt form for himſelf his rule of moral conduct, and change it as his circumſtances change.

Mr. Hume, that Female Infidelity, when known, is a ſmall thing, when unknown, nothing;

That Adultery muſt be practiſed, if we would obtain all the advantages of life;

That pride and ſelf-valuation are virtues;

That ſelf-denial and humility are not virtues, but uſeleſs and miſchievous; that they harden the heart, ſtupefy the underſtanding, and ſour the temper.

Lord Bolingbroke teaches, that the ſole foundation of modeſty is a vain deſire of ſhewing ourſelves ſuperior to mere animals.

That Adultery, Inceſt, Polygamy, and lewdneſs of

of every kind and degree, except inceſt between the neareſt relations, are warranted by the Law, or Religion, which he conſiders as the only Religion, or Law, of mankind. &c. &c.

Theſe and the preceding declarations clearly and directly authorize the full indulgence of every paſſion and appetite, and annihilate the exiſtence of crime, and the poſſibility of virtue. Yet all theſe are ſolemnly taught as rules of life, and as parts of the will of the Infinite God.

But this is not all. They have eventually taught the ſame things, in aſſertions leſs direct, and yet by irreſiſtible implication ſupporting the ſame conduct. The doctrine, that a Man is an animal, or that he is a machine, is a complete ſubverſion of morality. No man ever believed an ox, a mill, or a coach-wheel, to be a moral being. The ſame effects are produced by the light and indifferent manner in which moral ſubjects are regarded in many doctrines of theſe Philoſophers: as, when civil law is made the ſole foundation of right and wrong, the magiſtrate the ſole judge of religious truth, and the ſole ſource of religious obligation, as by Hobbes and Shaftſbury; and when health, taper legs, and broad ſhoulders are declared to be virtues by Hume.

In theſe and other ſimilar declarations, Philoſophers clearly prove, that they are wholly indifferent to vice and virtue, ſin and holineſs, and to all their amazing effects. This indifference they hold out in a thouſand forms, and with reſpect to the great body of moral principles. No ſentiment is more inſinuating than this. None more inſenſibly, or ſurely, ſteals upon the heart; none more thoroughly depraves the character; none more certainly conducts to miſery and ruin.

The ſame wretched conſequence is fatally derived from the ridicule, which they caſt upon every thing religious, virtuous, or ſerious.

Unſatisfied, however, with all theſe efforts, and convinced,

convinced, that a future ſtate of man muſt, if it exiſt, be a ſtate of reward to virtue, and of puniſhment to vice; that, if there be a God, he muſt be preſent to ſee every ſin, and every virtue, and diſpoſed to reward the one, and puniſh the other; and that, of courſe, there muſt be a judgment, and a recompenſe, they have applied themſelves, with an induſtry worthy of a better cauſe, to overthrow the belief, and terminate the exiſtence of theſe truths.

Thus Mr. Hobbes declares, that that, which is not matter, is nothing.

Mr. Blount, that the Soul is probably material.

Lord Shaftſbury, that the hope of reward, and the fear of puniſhment, cannot conſiſt with virtue.

Mr. Collins, that the ſoul is material and mortal.

Mr. Chubb, that the arguments for the immortality of the Soul are wholly unſatisfactory, and that it is probably material; and

That men will not be judged for their impiety, or ingratitude to God; nor for their injuſtice, or unkindneſs to each other; but only for injuries to the public; and

That even this is uncertain, and uſeleſs:

Mr. Hume, that the Soul of man is a machine; and that it is unreaſonable to believe an Intelligent cauſe of all things, &c.

Lord Bolingbroke, that God does not concern himſelf with the affairs of men at all; or if he does, he regards only collective bodies of men;

That he puniſhes none but through the magiſtrate; and,

That the Soul is material and mortal.

And the National Convention of France,

That death is an eternal ſleep.

Thus by Infidel Philoſophy is every hope taken away from Virtue, and every fear from Vice, however multiplied or abandoned. This has indeed been the ſum of all the purpoſes of this Philoſophy. The belief and the hope of future rewards, and the belief

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and the dread of future punishments, are the substance of all which they call superstition. To remove these from men, and especially the latter, they have studied and laboured most assiduously for ages.

Should they succeed to the extent of their wishes, what must be the consequences? Men will be left with all the instructions concerning the lawfulness of vice, which have been recited, and innumerable others of the same nature, given by these, and the whole train of Philosophers; with all the proofs of the insignificance and the non-existence of virtue; with the general license to plunder, to defraud, to deceive, and to pollute; and with no other restraint but civil law, or private honour: Law, which cannot know one in a hundred, of the crimes which men commit: Honour, which even in a Christian state of society, sustained by many virtuous men, and strengthened by prevailing moral opinions auspicious to virtue, and alarming to vice, will not either restrain, or regard, one crime in a thousand: Honour, which in the state of Society thus accomplished, amidst rulers, Philosophers, and other men of influence, thoroughly initiated in these doctrines, and amidst the universal depravity of communities, would know no distinction between virtue and convenience, between crimes and disagreeables. How soon would law and government lose that authority and energy which are now chiefly sustained by appeals to the presence, the will, and the agency, of a Ruler all present, all powerful, and unchangeably and infinitely opposed to every iniquity? How soon would man, ceasing to reverence his God, cease to regard his neighbour? How soon would every moral, every natural, tie be dissolved; every motive to justice, truth, and benevolence, be lost; and every attempt to confine passion and appetite within any bounds be forgotten? Virtue and Vice, as objects of human esteem, would change their places, and their characters. Pride would then be real virtue,

the Luſt of power real greatneſs, and Avarice real honour. The ſeat of Juſtice would be the neſt of plunder and robbery, and the edifices of learning cells of ſtudied iniquity, where methodized ſin would be the ſcience, and ſagacious perpetration the art. The private dwelling would be converted into a brothel, and the venerable matron and the ſnowy virgin would change characters with the bawd and the ſtrumpet; and the purity, the happineſs, and the hopes, of mankind would be buried under a promiſcuous and univerſal concubinage.

Were Philoſophy leſs exceptionable in its doctrines, and leſs favourably inclined to vice, ſtill, in its attempts to reſtrain vice, and encourage virtue, it would be totally weak and inefficacious. Every Individual Philoſopher utters many errors with the ſame breath and in the ſame diſcourſe, in which he utters alſo ſome truths. Every individual contradicts, ridicules, and calumniates, every other individual; and every ſect every other ſect. Thus truth and falſehood come from the ſame mouth with equal gravity and force; and the contrary ſyſtems of the combatants, are, on the one hand, derived from ſources equally reſpectable, and, on the other, are equally the objects of obloquy and deriſion, mutually and ſucceſsfully employed. As teachers, they have no authority, poſſeſs no power, can employ no ſanction, and promiſe no reward. The only ſupport of their ſyſtems is argument; often ſo abſtruſe, as to be underſtood imperfectly by themſelves, and not at all by moſt men; often ſo weak and futile, as to produce no effect, beſide contempt and ridicule; often ſo oppoſed by contrary arguments, as to be left without force, or influence; and always ſo unintereſting as neither to be read, nor regarded, by the body of mankind. This ſupport their example effectually deſtroys; for no man will believe, that the Philoſophy, which when heartily embraced does not render its author better, but leaves him worſe, than

multitudes

multitudes of thoſe who are without it, can be either uſeful or true.

The ſingle phraſe—Thus ſaith the Lord,—comes home to every ſerious man, with a force infinitely greater than that of all which Philoſophers have ever ſaid, or will ever ſay. . The Teacher, here, can neither be deceived, nor deceive. His authority to enjoin, his knowledge to diſcern, his diſpoſition and his power to reward obedience is immutable and boundleſs. Here ſomething is preſented to the mind, of ſufficient importance to arreſt its attention, to rouſe its hopes, and to command its efforts. To diſobedience the ſame attributes preſent a combination of motives, efficacious to alarm, and to deter. In the full view of theſe attributes, ſin is perpetrated only with a trembling hand, and an aching heart.

But in ſpite of all the efforts which Philoſophy can make to diſſuade men from vice, the ſingle human concluſion will ever be, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Some of the ancients, at times, made efforts of this nature; but they were fickly in their origin, and momentary in their operations; without energy, and without effect; an amuſement to the fancy, but not a melioration of the heart. The modern Philoſophy, unintereſted in the ſubject, or diſcouraged by the attempts of its predeceſſors, has joined in the general cry, and determined to encourage and ſanction this limited purſuit of good. Its doctrines, its arguments, its examples, have licenſed and defended guilty pleaſure, pleaſure confined to the preſent life, the pleaſure of ſinners, the pleaſure of animals. Before its peſtilential breath, as man before the Simoom of Nubia, truth, virtue, and happineſs, have ſickened, fallen, and died; while vice, like the fabled Upaz of Java, has in the ſame rank atmoſphere vigorouſly diffuſed its branches, ſhot up its infant ſtems, and corrupted and deſtroyed, around it, whatever had the principles or the promiſe of life.

3. Infidel Philoſophy has not hitherto been able to ſupport itſelf, nor to make any ſerious impreſſion on the evidence of the Divine Origin of Scriptures.

The great proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures have not, I apprehend, been at all ſeriouſly affected by the attacks of Infidels. The neceſſity of admitting the Hiſtory of the Scriptures, and the neceſſity of admitting the Revelation of the Scriptures, ariſing from the admiſſion of the Scriptural Hiſtory; The Arguments from Prophecy; from Miracles; from the Character of Chriſt; from the Origination of the New-Teſtament by uneducated men; from the Character and Conduct of the Apoſtles; from the erection and progreſs of Chriſtianity; from the Authenticity and Genuineneſs of the Scriptures; from their pure, harmonious, and ſublime Character; and from the preſent ſtate of the Jews; have in no inſtance been ſolidly anſwered.

There is not, ſo far as I have been informed, any anſwer of any Infidel to a capital argument in ſupport of Revelation, which has gained ſo great applauſe, or received, for the time, ſo general and confident reliance from Philoſophers, as Mr. Hume's celebrated Eſſay on Miracles. In the Introduction to it, Mr. Hume ſays—"*He flatters himself, he has discovered an argument, which will prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion.*" But ſince the Eſſays on the ſame ſubject by Adams, Campbell, Farmar and Price, have been publiſhed, and read, the applauſe and the reliance appear to be in a great meaſure withdrawn. I have been informed, that Mr. Hume himſelf conſidered Doctor Campbell's Anſwer to him as concluſive againſt him. If this moſt ingenious performance of the ableſt Infidel, by far the ableſt, who has hitherto appeared, has been ſo impotent to its purpoſe, the ſufficiency of the reſt may be eaſily determined.

There is, alſo, another argument, drawn from the comparative character of Chriſtians, and Infidels, which

which may be alleged with a force, incapable of being obviated. The weight of virtue has been wholly on the ſide of Chriſtianity. All moral truth is fairly tried by its influence on mankind. Nothing can be more properly or more forcibly contraſted, than the tendency of the doctrines of the Scriptures, and the tendency of Infidel Philoſophy; and nothing can more ſtrongly illuſtrate this contraſt, than the oppoſite lives of Chriſtians and Infidels. The life of St. Paul alone, puts all Infidelity out of countenance. The early Chriſtians in general, even as repreſented by many of their moſt reſpectable enemies, have no parallels in the annals of Infidelity. From the infancy of the Chriſtian church to the preſent time, in all periods ſome, and in moſt periods many, Chriſtians have worne the ſame character. In our own land, and in every neighbourhood, may be daily found thoſe, who adorn the human name with all the virtues, which Infidels have at any time profeſſed, and with many of a ſuperior kind, to which they have never formed a pretention. So evident is the want of morals on the part of Infidels, in this country, generally, that to ſay—"A man is an Infidel"—is underſtood, of courſe, as a declaration, that he is a plainly immoral man. On the contrary, to ſay—"A man is a true or real Chriſtian"—is univerſally underſtood as a declaration, that he is a man diſtinguiſhedly virtuous. This phraſeology has its origin in the experience, and common ſenſe, of mankind, and may be fairly aſſumed as complete evidence of the ſentiment alleged.

That this Philoſophy is unable to ſupport itſelf, is evident from its progreſs. Philoſophers, as has been remarked, have, from the beginning, changed continually the Infidel ſyſtem. The doctrines which Herbert and Tindal declared to be ſo evident, that God could not make them more evident, were wholly given up, as untenable, by Hume; and the Scepticiſm of Hume ſuſtained no higher character in the mind

mind of D'Alembert. Mere Infidelity gave up Natural Religion, and Atheiſm mere Infidelity. Atheiſm is the ſyſtem at preſent in vogue. What will ſucceed it cannot be foreſeen. One conſolation, however, attends the ſubject; and that is—No other ſyſtem can be ſo groundleſs, ſo deſpicable, or ſo completely ruinous to the morals and happineſs of mankind.

The conduct of Philoſophers in oppoſing their antagoniſts, and in ſupporting themſelves, has been alike, and has alike evinced the weakneſs of their cauſe, in both reſpects. Each effort has had, as was to be expected, its day of applauſe and adoption, and has then given up its place, and importance, to a ſucceeding effort. Succeeding Philoſophers, inſtead of relying on the arguments, or ſyſtems, of their predeceſſors, have laborioufly deviſed new ones. Each relies apparently, and perhaps firmly, upon his own; but is of courſe forſaken by thoſe who come after him. The weight, which they have had, for a time, has been therefore caſual; the weight of novelty, faſhion, and currency, and the reſult of ingenuity and celebrity; not the weight of truth and evidence, nor the reſult of ſerious and permanent conviction. Were ſucceeding Philoſophers ſatisfied with either the oppoſition, or the doctrines of their predeceſſors, they would of courſe have inſiſted anew on their arguments and ſyſtems; explained more fully the parts and nature of each, and obviated the anſwers of their adverſaries. Convinced of the truth and rectitude of what had been done before, they would have felt themſelves bound to exert themſelves in its defence. Natural Religion, or Theiſm, would now have been the great reliance of Infidels, and all their arguments would have been directed to its ſupport. The Atheiſts feel, at the preſent time, a triumphant confidence in the permanency of their ſyſtem; the Theiſts, a few years ſince, felt equally ſatisfied of the continuance of theirs. This confidence in both was

equally

equally well founded. There is now all the probability, that thoſe, who are to come, will deſert Atheiſm, which there was a little while ſince, that the preſent ſyſtem would deſert Theiſm. Yet now the French Committee of Public Inſtruction declare, that a people of Theiſts will neceſſarily become Revelationiſts.

The inſolence and ridicule, exhibited univerſally by Infidel Writers, is, at leaſt to my view, a ſtrong indication of the conſciouſneſs of the weakneſs of their cauſe, and of the inſufficiency of their arguments. Men who feel their cauſe to be good, and their means of ſupport to be ſtrong, uſually diſcover moderation and decency in the management. A ſtrong man is uſually mild, and civil; a weak one, to conceal his weakneſs, is often petulant and bluſtering. Were Infidels ſatisfied of the goodneſs of their cauſe, and the ſoundneſs of their arguments, they would not, it is preſumed, ſo often reſort to ridicule inſtead of reaſoning, nor intrench themſelves behind inſolence and contempt, inſtead of facts and evidence. In any other caſe, this conduct would be deemed a proof of weakneſs in the cauſe, and of doubt in its advocates.

As the great arguments in ſupport of Chriſtianity remain in full force, it is rationally concluded, that they will ever ſo remain. Infidel Philoſophers, in great numbers, of the utmoſt enmity to the Chriſtian cauſe, of eminent induſtry, and of as conſiderable ingenuity as will probably be found hereafter, have already exhauſted their ſtrength in their attacks on Revelation. As they have hitherto failed of ſucceſs, it is fairly preſumed, that they will finally fail. Almoſt all the topics of oppoſition have been thoroughly explored, and the moſt effectual uſe made of them which is practicable. Hence they will probably gain little additional ſtrength on the ſide of argument. More influence, and more converts, they may not improbably gain. The preſent time is ſup-

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poſed to be marked in Prophecy, as an eminent ſeaſon of deluſion; and the deluſion has not, hitherto, reached the bounds predicted. But to gain theſe is a very different thing from acquiring additional ſtrength from reaſon and evidence.

To a ſerious and candid man the fact, above recited, muſt appear of high importance. He cannot but ſee, that Chriſtianity has been attacked by a numerous hoſt of enemies, ardent, induſtrious, and ingenious, through a long period, with unremitted efforts, and on every ſide. No meaſure has been left untried, no means of ſucceſs unexplored, and no kind of hoſtility ſcrupled. Its ſtrength has therefore been proved. Such a man will feel of courſe, that Chriſtianity muſt reſiſt ſucceſsfully every future aſſault, and that it will be early enough to doubt of its firmneſs when its pillars ſhall begin to be ſhaken, and its foundation to be undermined.

4. Philoſophy will not, and Chriſtianity will, increaſe your comfort, and leſſen your diſtreſſes here, and ſave you from miſery, and confer on you happineſs, hereafter.

From the obſervations already made, you muſt have clearly perceived, that Philoſophy furniſhes you with no directory to regulate your moral conduct, no ſcheme of the duties of life. As pure Theiſm, or Natural Religion, it teaches not a duty, which is not unſpeakably better taught by the Scriptures; while it is wholly ignorant of very many, which, when taught, are ſeen to be of the higheſt importance. It knows not, it cannot know, what ſervice, what worſhip, is acceptable to God, or whether any can be accepted. It ſees all men to be ſinners, and yet knows not that ſinners can be forgiven, or reinſtated in the character and condition of faithful ſubjects of the government of God. If this be poſſible, it knows not how, when, or where. Of ſanctions to enforce, and motives to encourage obedience, it is deſtitute and beggared. To the peace,

which

which ſprings from the conſcious performance of duty it is a ſtranger; and in the joy, which flows from hopeful acceptance with God, it ſhares not, even as a gueſt. Under theſe diſadvantages, you will not wonder, that it lingers and languiſhes in its courſe, and halts at a diſtance from the gate of virtue.

As mere Infidelity, it teaches nothing but to conteſt all principles, and to adopt none. As Scepticiſm, it has an ocean of doubt and agitation, in which there are no ſoundings, and to which there is no ſhore. As Animaliſm and Atheiſm it completes the ravage and ruin of man, which, in its preceding forms, it had ſo ſucceſsfully begun. It now holds out the rank Circœan draught, and ſends the deluded wretches, who are allured to taſte, to briſtle and wallow with the ſwine, to play tricks with the monkey, to rage and rend with the tiger, and to putrify into nothing with the herd of kindred brutes.

Chriſtianity, with an influence infinitely more benevolent, enhances the value of your preſent life beyond the ſearch of calculation. It informs you, that you are the intelligent and moral creatures of the All-perfect JEHOVAH, who made, who preſerves, who rules the Univerſe, who is preſent in all places, who beholds all things; who is eternal and immutable; infinitely benevolent, infinitely beneficent; the faithful friend of the virtuous; the unchanging enemy of ſin; the rewarder, and the reward, of all returning ſinners, who diligently ſeek him. In this character it preſents to you a direct, clear, and perfect ſyſtem of rules for all your moral conduct; rules of thinking, ſpeaking, and acting; rules reaching every poſſible caſe, and removing every rational doubt. Here is no uncertainty, no wavering, no toſſing on the billows of anxiety, no plunging into the gulph of deſpair. Your path is a ſtraight and beaten way, and, were you wayfaring men, and fools, you need not err therein.

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journey, you are furniſhed with aids and motives infinite, to check your delays, to recall your wanderings, to cheer fatigue, to refreſh your languor, to leſſen your difficulties, to renew your ſtrength, and to prolong your perſeverance to the end. Should you at any time, through ignorance, inattention, or allurement, dangerouſly diverge from your courſe, a ſweet and charming Voice behind you cries "This is the way, walk ye therein."

In the ſublime character of moral ſubjects of the All-ruling God, you are called to a life of obedience and virtue. Sinners, indeed, you are: and as ſuch, in the eye of Natural Religion are condemned and loſt; but in the Scriptures you are taught, that moſt delight of all truths, that you may riſe again to the character, and the bleſſing, of thoſe, who have never fallen; and may thus riſe upon conditions, which, if guided by wiſdom, you would yourſelves have choſen, as the moſt eaſy, the moſt reaſonable, the moſt deſirable, of all conditions; upon conditions, which are diſtinguiſhed bleſſings in themſelves, and the beginning of bleſſings, which will multiply forever. A ſcheme of duty is propoſed to you, and required of you; but every part of it is at once uſeful and delightful. From the performance of it will daily and infallibly ſpring the peace of an approving mind, the dignity of conſcious virtue, the retreat of gloomy apprehenſion, and the dawn of radiant hope, the day-ſtar of endleſs life.

Should you hereafter have families, your communication of the principles, and your practice of the duties, of Chriſtianity, will beyond all things elſe, inſure to you domeſtic peace and proſperity. Your houſeholds will aſſume the ſame dignified character, and ſhare in the ſame requiſite enjoyments. All will love, eſteem, and befriend, and be loved, eſteemed, and befriended. Your intereſts, deſigns, and purſuits, will be noble and virtuous, the parents of concord and happineſs. To the ties of natural affection

will

will be ſuperadded the benevolence, and the brotherly love, of the Goſpel; and theſe will animate, refine, and exalt every affection, and every purpoſe, will bring daily conſolation and enduring joy, and will prove the delightful forerunners of future beatitude.

The Friends, who viſit you, will eſteem and love you, for they will find in your character ſomething to be eſteemed and loved. They will alſo be friends, of the beſt character, will moſt cordially return your kind offices, and will moſt richly merit and laſtingly retain your confidence. They will be friends here, and friends forever.

To the Neighbourhoods around you you will be, and will be eſteemed, beneſactors and bleſſings. The poor, the ſick, the outcaſt, the friendleſs, and the diſconſolate, will eſpecially, acknowledge you as their patrons. Enemies you will find; for the performance of your duty will oppoſe luſt, and reſtrain corruption but they will be ſuch enemies, as, without a total change of their character, a good man would not wiſh to be his friend. Every vicious man will feel his inferiority to you with pain, and experience deep mortification in knowing, that he cannot look you in the face with a compoſed countenance, and ſteady eye. Compare your friends with your enemies, and you will find nothing to be regretted.

Nor will you be leſs uſeful to your Country. Rational Freedom cannot be preſerved without the aid of Chriſtianity. Not a proof is found in the experience, not a probability is preſented to the judgment, of man, that Infidelity can ſupport a free, and at the ſame time an efficient, government. In this country, the freeſt, and the happieſt, which the world has hitherto ſeen, the whole ſyſtem of policy originated, has continued, and ſtands on the ſingle baſis of Chriſtianity. Good ſubjects have been formed here by forming good men; and none but good ſubjects can long be governed by perſuaſion. The learning,

peace, mild intercourſe, and univerſally happy ſtate of ſociety, enjoyed here, all own the ſame origin. Would you preſerve theſe bleſſings during your own lives, would you hand them down to poſterity, increaſing multitudes of thoſe who are not Chriſtians, and all thoſe who are, with one voice tell you "Embrace Chriſtianity."

It is by no means my intention, or my wiſh, to flatter you with hopes of unmingled happineſs on this ſide of the grave. This world has ever been and ſtill is, a vale of tears. Want, pain, ſorrow, diſeaſe, and death, are conſtant tenants of this unhappy ſoil, and frequent inmates of every human dwelling. To aid the ſufferer to ſuſtain, and to vanquiſh, theſe unfriendly viſitors, Chriſtianity furniſhes the peace, the patience, and the fortitude of virtue, the conſciouſneſs of forgiven ſin, and Infinite complacency, and the ſupporting hope of endleſs and evergrowing ſanctity, happineſs, and glory. In every throbbing boſom ſhe ſings "This light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory, that ſhall be revealed hereafter." The ſong is the ſong of Angels; the voice is the voice of God.

All theſe alleviations are, at a ſtroke ſwept away by the beſom of Philoſophy. Like a rude, unfeeling nurſe, ſhe approaches the bed of pain and ſickneſs, and tells the groaning ſufferer, that he is indeed miſerable; and that he may quietly reſolve to bear his calamities, for they are irremediable and hopeleſs. To the deſpairing victims of want, infamy, and oppreſſion, ſhe extends her hand, empty of comfort, and paſſes by on the other ſide. The Parent, overwhelmed by woe for the loſs of his only ſon, ſhe coolly informs, that his tears and his ſighs are uſeleſs, for his favourite has ceaſed from the light of the living, and vaniſhed forever. To the failing eye of the poor, deſponding, and expiring wretch ſhe holds out her dark lantern, and as the only conſolation which ſhe can give, ſhews him the ſullen region of annihilation,

annihilation, deſtined to receive and wrap him in eternal and oblivious night.

You, with the reſt of men, muſt ſuffer woe. Poverty may betide, ſhame may arreſt, pain may agonize, ſorrow may ſink, diſeaſe may waſte, and death will befal you. In all theſe evils you will ſeek for conſolation, ſupport, and hope. From Philoſophy you will find none. On that ſolemn day, which is faſt approaching, when you will be extended upon the bed of death, when the phyſician has bidden you adieu, and your friends are watching for the parting gaſp, your ſouls will cling to exiſtence, will pant for relief, and will ſearch the Univerſe for a glimmering of hope. Should Philoſophy have been your boſom companion, and the arm on which you have finally reſted, you will then know what it is to have renounced Religion, to look back on a life of ſin with agony, and forward to a world of ſuſpenſe with horror. Chriſtianity, ſighing her laſt farewell, and dropping her parting tear, will retire in ſilence and ſorrow, and will mourn with deep compaſſion, that, forlorn and dreadful as was your lot, you would not ſuffer her to allay your miſery, and with the lamp of hope light you through your melancholy path into world of future being.

Religion, on the contrary, feels, and proves, a regard for the ſorrows of man, infinitely more tender, ſoothing, and ſupporting. Like the fabled power of inchantment, ſhe changes the thorny couch into a bed of down, cloſes with a touch the wounds of the ſoul, and converts a wilderneſs of woe into the borders of Paradiſe. Whenever you are forced to drink the cup of bitterneſs, Mercy, at her call, will ſtand by your ſide, and mingle ſweetneſs with the draught; while with a voice of mildneſs and conſolation ſhe will whiſper to you, that the potion, though unpleaſant, is neceſſary and balſamic; that you have diſeaſes to be removed, and morbid principles to be exterminated; and that the unpalatable adminiſtration

tion will aſſuredly eſtabliſh in you health immortal. The ſame ſweetener of life will accompany you to the end, and, ſeating herſelf by your dying bed, will draw aſide the curtains of eternity, will bid you liſt your cloſing eyes on the end of ſorrow, pain, and care, and, in the opened gates of peace and glory, will point to you, in full view, the friends of Chriſt, waiting to hail your arrival.

That Chriſtianity gives all theſe bleſſings, and gives them certainly; that it produces no loſs, and great gain, in the preſent world; that it makes nothing worſe, and every thing better; is clearly evident from the nature of the Chriſtian ſyſtem. The doctrines, precepts, and promiſes, contain and ſecure all this, and much more. At the ſame time, every Chriſtian is a witneſs to this truth. Every Chriſtian has, by experience, known the pleaſures of ſin, and by the ſame experience alſo, has known the pleaſures of religion. To whatever degree therefore, his experience has extended, he is a complete judge of both. Many, very many Chriſtians have alſo fully enjoyed the higheſt pleaſures of ſcience and intellect, and are of courſe unexceptionable judges of theſe pleaſures. But no Chriſtian was ever found, who for a moment admitted that any pleaſures were to be compared with thoſe of religion; not one, who would not ſay, that for the loſs of religion worlds would be a poor compenſation. In every other caſe this evidence would be acknowledged as complete. Nor is it balanced, or leſſened, by any contrary evidence. Infidels have never taſted the pleaſures of religion, and, in the deciſion of this queſtion, are therefore without a voice.

With theſe bleſſings in view, you will, I truſt without a ſigh, leave to the Infidel his peculiar gratifications. In every innocent enjoyment you can partake, at leaſt, as largely as he. You will not, therefore, repine that you cannot ſhine at a horſe-race, bet at a cockpit, win at a gaming-table, riot

at the board of intemperance, drink deep at the midnight debauch, or ſteal to infamous enjoyments at the brothel.

But the moſt important conſideration is yet to be ſuggeſted; a conſideration infinitely awful and glorious. There may be an Hereafter. There may be a future Judgment, a future Retribution. The courſe of Sin, begun here, may continue forever. The ſeed of virtue, ſown in the preſent world, and raiſed to a young and feeble ſtem, may be deſtined to growth immortal. The miſery produced here by Sin, may be unceaſingly generated by the ſame wretched cauſe, through ages which cannot end. The peace and joy which virtue creates during this tranſient life, the ſame illuſtrious power may expand and prolong, through an ever-enlarging progreſs.

What the natural eye thus ſees with dim and probable viſion, Chriſtianity, poſſeſſed of ſuperior optics, diſcerns and promiſes with clear, prophetic certainty. Endleſs death and endleſs life are written in full and glowing characters in the book, ſealed to unenlightened and unaſſiſted man with ſeven ſeals. That book a hand infinite and ſupreme unrols to every humble, penitent, believing mind, and diſcloſes to the enraptured view the page of eternity, on which, things divine and immortal are pencilled with ſun-beams. A reſidence, finiſhed with infinite workmanſhip, employments pure and raviſhing, a character completely dignified and lovely, companions the firſt and beſt in the univerſe, a ſyſtem of Providence, compoſed wholly of good, refining, aſcending, and brightening forever, and a God ſeen, known, and enjoyed, in all his combined perfection, are there drawn in colours of light and life.

In the ſame volume is diſcloſed by the ſame hand the immenſe woe, deſtined to reward the perpetration of iniquity, voluntary blindneſs, and immoveable impenitence. Allured and charmed by ſupreme endearments, on the one hand, the mind is, on the other

other, equally awakened and alarmed. Good and evil paſſing conception, paſſing limits, are offered to the choice; and by that choice alone the good may be ſecured, and evil avoided, forever.

With reſpect to theſe amazing things, Philoſophy knows nothing, threatens nothing, promiſes nothing. To Philoſophy the inviſible world is an unknown vaſt, over which, like the raven ſent out of the ark, ſhe wanders with a wearied wing, ſeeking reſt, and finding none. To her exploring eye, the univerſe is one immenſe, unfathomable ocean. Above, around, beneath, all is doubt, anxiety, and deſpair. Her accounts are, like her views, uncertain and conjectural only, the foundations of no aſſent, no ſatisfaction. If you adhere to them, you cannot loſe, and you may infinitely gain. An infinite difference of poſſible good and evil, therefore, demands your adoption of Chriſtianity. I need not place the ſubject on higher ground. To every thinking man there is, here, a motive infinite to embrace Chriſtianity, and reject Infidel Philoſophy.

If there is a God (and that there is, is more certain, and evident, than that there is any thing beſide one's ſelf) he is doubtleſs perfect in holineſs, as well as in power and knowledge. With holy or virtuous creatures he muſt of courſe be pleaſed; becauſe holineſs is obedience to his will, and becauſe it is a reſemblance to his character. As he muſt be pleaſed with his own character, ſo he muſt be pleaſed with his creatures, whenever they poſſeſs a character ſimilar to his own. That he ſhould not be pleaſed to have his will obeyed is impoſſible. The very ſuppoſition, that the Ruler has a will, involves in it neceſſarily, that he muſt be pleaſed to be obeyed. All the doctrines of Revelation, all the precepts, are ſummed up in this memorable ſentence, "Be ye holy, as I the Lord your God am holy." To accompliſh holineſs, or virtue, in man is the ſingle end of the Chriſtian ſyſtem. Chriſtianity therefore teaches, enjoins,

enjoins, and with infinite motives purſues, what reaſon dictates as the higheſt wiſdom of man. But, in all this, Infidel Philoſophy has no part, nor lot, nor memorial.

Thus, in every view, the ſtate and the proſpects of the Chriſtian are full of comfort, peace, and hope, of medicines for grief, and ſeaſonings for joy. The preſent ſtate of the Infidel is deſtitute of both, and proſpects he has none. Here, the religion of the Chriſtian brings with it, in hand, worth, uſefulneſs, and dignity; and hereafter, in bright reverſion, and through an interminable progreſs, life, wiſdom, virtue, happineſs, and glory. Philoſophy, on the contrary, adds to him, here, no enjoyment, and robs him of the chief ſupport of ſuffering; and, beyond the grave, plunders him of heaven, and conſigns him to annihilation and deſpair.*

* Since theſe diſcourſes were ſent to the preſs, I have ſeen a work lately publiſhed in Great Britain, and republiſhed in America, written by J. Robiſon, Profeſſor of Natural Philoſophy to the Univerſity of Edinburgh, and Secretary of the Royal Society in that city, and entitled, "A conſpiracy againſt all the Governments and Religions in Europe." In this work the reader may ſee the dangers of Infidel Philoſophy ſet in the ſtrongeſt light poſſible. He may ſee a plan formed, and to an alarming degree executed, for exterminating Chriſtianity, Natural Religion, the belief of a God, of the immortality of the Soul, and Moral obligation; for rooting out of the world civil and domeſtic government, the right of property, marriage, natural affection, chaſtity, and decency; and in a word, for deſtroying whatever is virtuous, refined, or deſirable, and introducing again univerſal ſavageneſs and brutiſm. All this is to be done under the pretence of enlarged Philanthropy, and of giving mankind liberty and equality. By this maſk is carefully concealed the true end, which is no leſs than to reduce the whole human race under a complete ſubjugation to theſe Philoſophers; a ſubjugation of mind as well as of body.

THE END.

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